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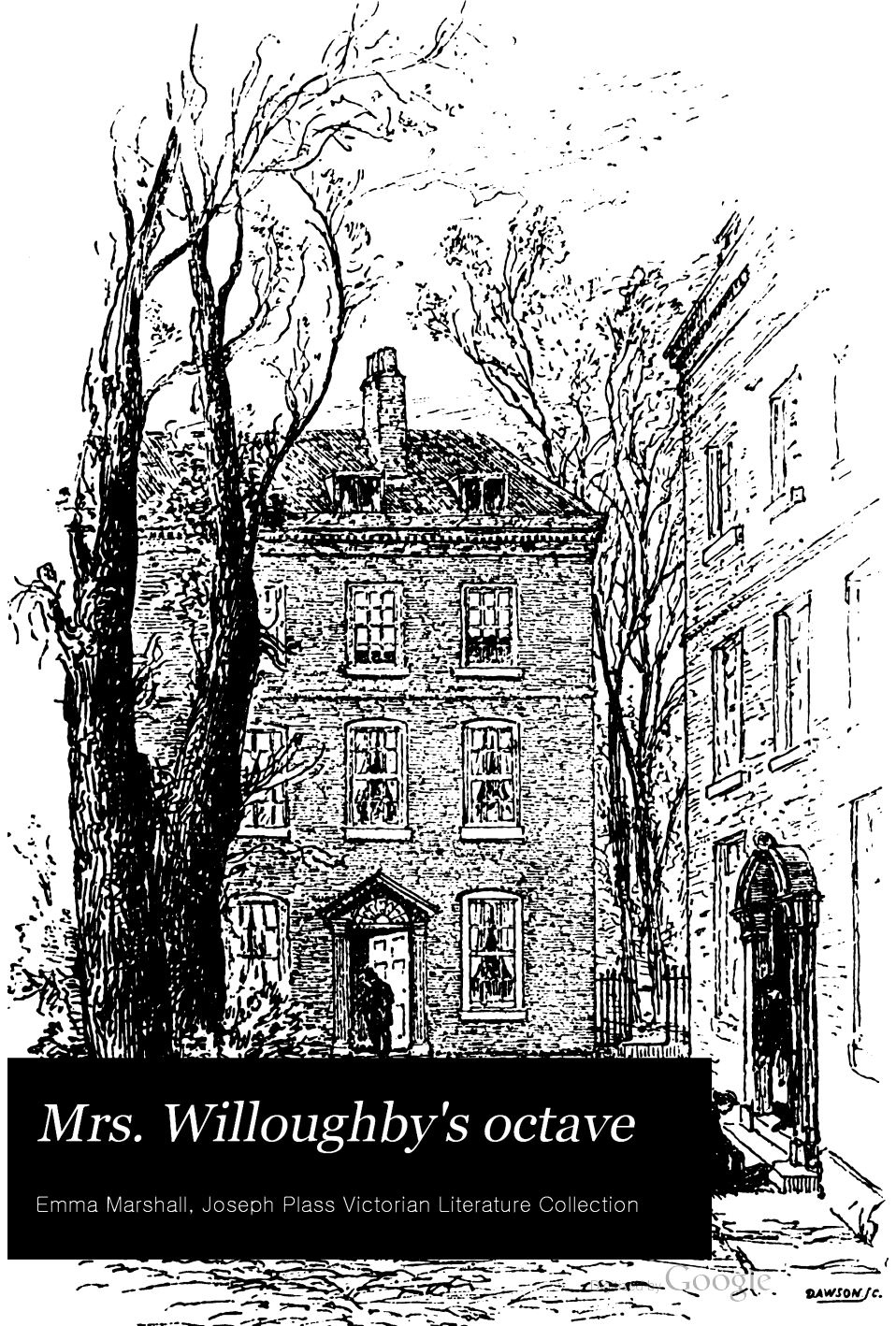

Mrs. Willoughby's octave

Emma Marshall, Joseph Plass Victorian Literature Collection

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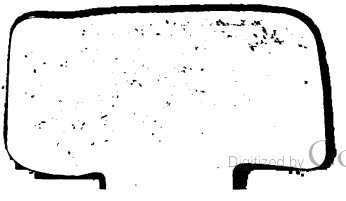

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MRS. WILLOUGHBY'S OCTAVE.

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Mrs. WILLOUGHBY'S *OCTAVE*

A TALE

By Emma Marshall

Author of 'Life's Aftermath,' 'In Colston's Days,' &c.

LONDON

SEELEY & CO., 54, FLEET STREET

1884

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MRS. WILLOUGHBY'S OCTAVE.

CHAPTER I.

HEATHFIELD.

'MOTHER, I do believe there is another van of furniture coming to St. Winifred's. Yes! and such shabby old things. They look as if they had come out of a broker's shop in Valehead. Do look, Gerard! here comes such a funny clock, and a doll's house. There must be a little girl in the family.'

The speaker was a girl of fifteen, tall and slim, and well dressed—perhaps a little *too* well dressed for her age. She was stationed at the bay-window of a house called Heathfield, and looked across a very muddy dirty road to another house called St. Winifred's.

Now these names may bring to your mind very romantic places, full of associations of past and present. I must at once dispel the illusion by telling you that Heathfield and St. Winifred's were two

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prosaic red-brick houses faced with white stonework. Each house had a bay-window, with two stories above it, and an entrance at the side, raised by steps above the level of the road which separated them. There were gardens in front, and gardens behind. The front windows commanded a very pretty view of a common or down, broken into little irregular dips and eminences, where the bracken still found its place, and the hawthorn bushes in the spring were a mass of snowy blossoms. For all this, Heathfield and St. Winifred's were but suburban residences, and stood, with a dozen others with tempting names, all along the edge of this common. The great city of Valehead was stretching out its arms wider and wider every day, and houses of every size and pretension lay between Heathfield and the great manufacturing centre, which grew larger and murkier and, so report said, richer every year.

Downside Park was at the farthest limits of Valehead, on the western side, and was sought after by people who had to consult economy, as the rent of houses was very much cheaper than that of those nearer the amusements and shops of the flourishing town in the valley.

So much for the houses, that you may not build too much upon their names, or fancy them at all grander than they were.

And now for the people who inhabited them. The fashionably dressed lady leaning back in a

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comfortable chair by the fire was Maude Burnley's mother. She raised herself a little that she might catch a sight of the van, and then said:

'Do not be seen staring at the people, Maude. Gerard, come away from the window.'

'There are not any people, mother — it's only *things*,' said Maude, making no attempt to leave her position. 'Oh, do look!—there goes a box of books bang into the mud! How badly it must have been packed.'

'I say,' exclaimed Gerard, 'it is not a cheerful afternoon for a removal. This nasty sort of drizzling rain wets everything in a sly way. There comes another shaky old wardrobe, and another bookcase.'

And now the drawing-room door opened, and a girl of nineteen came in. She was dressed very plainly in black, and her hair, instead of being curled and frizzed like a doll's in a shop, or like Maude's, was gathered back from a very straight forehead, and closely plaited in a low knot. She had a small canvas in her hand, and she set it up against the wall on a little table, saying:

'I think I have finished this picture now, Aunt Katherine. Do you like it?'

Again there was a slight elevation of Lady Katherine's head from the cushion of the chair, and she said:

'Hum—yes. I think it's rather nice, but I am no great judge. Isn't the cat's paw too big?'

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Then the reclining attitude was resumed, and the book which was apparently so interesting again absorbed the reader's attention.

The little artist said not a word, but stood gazing at her work with a sad, wistful eyes.

'If I had some one to care, how nice it would be,' she thought. 'They don't care what my pictures are like—they don't understand—they don't *know*. How should they? The cat's paw too big! I know it is *not!* As if the child, hugging her only friend, were not of a hundred times more importance than the cat's paw!'

'What did you make the child ragged for?' Gerard now exclaimed. He had for a moment left the post of observation in the bay-window, and came round to look at the picture. 'But, I say, Frieda, it is awfully jolly! The child isn't much of it, but the cat! It makes me long to tickle its head and make it purr.'

And now Maude came to add her note of criticism.

'Oh! I love the pussie, but I hate the child—such a forlorn, stupid little thing in that tattered frock! Are you going to sell the picture?'

The colour came into Frieda's pale face, and she said in a low voice:

'If I can.'

'I can't think what you do with all your money, Frieda; you never buy anything pretty, and very seldom give away anything.'

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'I do wish you would not be so impertinent, Maude,' Frieda said, her dark eyes flashing on the little fair, curly-headed beauty, who was one of those provoking girls who think themselves privileged to say anything, and are often encouraged to do so by their elders and betters when they ought to be checked—or, as Gerard would have said,' well snubbed.'

'There, now she is off in a huff!' exclaimed Maude, as the door opened and shut again with a sharp sound. Doors often express irritation, when words have scarcely done so.

Again Lady Katherine looked up.

'Dear! what a noise! who is banging the door like that?'

'Frieda in one of her tantrums, that's all,' said Maude, who had gone back to the window.

'She has a very bad temper,' said Lady Katherine. 'It is most unfortunate for us; but I don't know from whom she inherits it. Your poor father's brother was a very good-natured man, though so sadly imprudent, marrying on a small living, and having a wife so totally unable to manage for him. Is that a carriage stopping here?'

'No, mother; it is at St. Winifred's. Oh, it is a fly crammed with people. I do believe it is the people arriving as well as the furniture. Oh, Gerard, do look!—quick, count them! There are four boys and a girl, and a big boy on the box. And here's another fly!—it is most exciting!—boxes piled

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up; and there is an old, no, a middle-aged lady, like yourself, mother, getting out, and a little tiny girl, and a small boy in knickerbockers, and a fat nurse, and lots of packages. Well! where can they sleep to-night? The furniture is only just put in; they will have to sleep on the floor.'

'What *sad* gossip!' said Lady Katherine, in the sort of deprecating tone in which she often addressed her children. 'My dear Maude, take care you are not seen; it is so underbred to pry into other people's affairs. How many children do you say there are?'

By this time Lady Katherine herself had drawn nearer the bay-window, well shielded from observation by the folds of the curtain; but to judge by the gold eyeglasses which she fitted on her highly-arched nose, and the expression of her face, she was more interested in the arrival of her neighbours than she wished to appear.

'I think the name is Willoughby,' she said. 'Thompson said it was a lady with a host of children. Well, I hope they are less trouble to her than my two are to me.'

'Just as if we were a scrap of trouble to you, dear mumsie!' Maude said, going up to her tall handsome mother, and nestling close to her. 'We are not *any* trouble — nothing but pleasure to our dear old mumsie.'

Lady Katherine caressed the thick curly hair of her little daughter, and said:

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'Miss Masterman complained of you again to-day, Maude. I shall be compelled to change your governess, I expect; for it is most trying to have these perpetual fault-findings and disagreements.'

'Mother, darling, *do* let me go to school; I should get on fifty times better. It is so dull sitting up there with old Ready.'

'Maude!'

'That's Gerard's name for her. Why, he's gone!' she said, peeping round her fold of curtain. 'I dare say he is gone into the dining-room, where you have a very good view of St. Winifred's. He is deeply interested in the heap of boys. Shall we know them, mother—will you call on them?'

'I shall enquire about them first, my dear. It does not do to trust altogether to a name, though Willoughby is certainly a very good one. Now, darling, do go and prepare your history for Miss Masterman; and have you practised an hour to-day?'

'No, only ten minutes; but here goes!' and Maude darted to the piano, and began to rattle off her scales.

'Oh! hush, Maude!—pray go to the schoolroom piano; and do be careful about your practice. Miss Masterman says——'

But Maude did not wait to hear what Miss Masterman said; for before Lady Katherine could finish her sentence, she was gone.

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Gerard was already in the schoolroom—not, I am afraid, at his preparation for the next day, but deep in the pages of one of Jules Verne's books, which, however amusing in their way, are not exactly of the kind to help a boy of sixteen to master a difficulty in Xenophon.

'I say, Maude, don't strum,' he said; 'I can't put up with it; let's talk. What do you think of all those boys coming next door, or rather "over the way"? I like the look of the big fellow on the box of the first fly. Of course I shan't have anything to do with the kids. And there is a girl for you; so we shall be set up in the article friend.'

'It all depends upon whether mother will call or not.'

'Call! of *course* she will.'

Maude shook her head.

'I am not so sure. If she thinks the Willoughbys are "somebodys," she will call fast enough; but if she thinks they are "nobodys," like poor Mrs. Jones at Grassmere, or the little old lady at Belle Vue, *nothing* will make her call.'

'What a shame!' said Gerard vehemently. 'I hate these stuck-up notions.'

'Well,' said Maude doubtfully, 'there *are* differences, you know.'

'Stuff! This is an age of progress, and by the end of the next century you will see there won't be such silly pride tolerated.'

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'I shan't see it,' said Maude, laughing, 'nor you either, unless we live to a hundred and ten, like the old woman in Thompson's rhyme, who

> '"Lived to the age of a hundred and ten,
> And died from the fall of a cherry-tree then."'

'Plucky old lady!' said Gerard. 'I hope she got as many cherries as she wanted first. But I am in sober earnest, Maude. The whole face of things is changing. Power, culture, genius—these are to be the signs of the true aristocrats of the coming age. The whole pack of lords and ladies, and earls and dukes, will be just nowhere.'

These sentiments came with strange effect from a young gentleman, who at sixteen was quite contented with his very moderate success in the Valehead College, and whose 'culture' and 'powers' had not lifted him above the 'upper fourth,' or crowned him as yet with any very marked distinction.

'Well, I am going to write my history paper now for Miss Masterman; so be quiet, there's a dear boy.'

A momentary silence followed, and then Gerard broke out again:

'I say, Maude, I think it is a shame to tease Frieda as you do.'

'Tease her! I am sure I don't!'

'Yes, you do. She has a right to earn money and spend it. What business is it of yours? I

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know Frieda has a hard time of it with us, and we ought to be kinder to her. She is very clever, and a real artist, and she is always ready to do anything for us when we ask her.'

'Oh, I know that; but I think she is very huffy, and easily put out. Think of her this afternoon, how she bounced out of the room: and she is gone to shut herself up, I dare say, in her own room, and we shall see no more of her till dinner. I think,' said Maude, with a sidelong glance in a mirror over the chimney-piece—'I think, after all, it's better to be ornamental than an artist. Now, *do* be quiet, Gerard, and let *me* work, if you are determined to be idle.'

Maude's idea of *work* was not, perhaps, the one usually recognised, for she left her books and papers several times to go to the window to see how the newly arrived neighbours were progressing. Then she took an interlude of a few bars of a sonata, then played two or three of Bettini's exercises, and finally wrote in her essay on the time of Henry VIII., that he was so disappointed with his wife, Anne of Austria, because she was quite unlike the photograph that had been sent him, that he divorced her, and immediately married some one else. *Who* that 'some one' was, was left for Miss Masterman to decide.

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CHAPTER II.

LITTLE MISS JOHNSTONE.

MEANWHILE Frieda, instead of shutting herself up in her own room, as Maude had prophesied, had put on her tightly-fitting ulster, and was skimming the uneven surface of the downs at a rapid pace.

'So soon to fail again!' she was saying to herself. 'So soon to be angry, and blaze out in a fury, because they did not like my picture, and then asked me what I did with my money.' Frieda was in that mood when the drizzling rain which came on the breath of a wind blowing from the Channel was a positive relief to her. The murky sky above her, the trees dripping with moisture, and sending their sere leaves one by one to the ground, were more in harmony with her feelings than a bright sun,

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blue sky, and waving branches of emerald green would have been. She was one of those people who always find exercise useful when greatly harassed or irritated. And she walked straight on at the same rapid pace for two miles, till the gathering twilight of the October evening warned her to return. That calm exterior of hers often misled those who knew her as to her real nature. And those who knew her, or cared to know her, were few. Her father and mother both died within a month of each other. When she was scarcely twelve. Her uncle had brought her to his home, saying to his wife:

'I did not bring the boy too, as I should have liked to do; but I thought you would object to two children. A relation of poor Alicia's has taken him; and though, perhaps, rather out of our rank in life, I thought it was the best thing to decide upon.'

'Well, really!' Lady Katherine had exclaimed, 'you could not expect me to take *two* children: especially when, as we know, their mother was not a person of any family.'

Mr. Burnley had given a very emphatic shrug of his shoulders, but he said coolly:

'No, my dear, I certainly did *not* expect it; and, as the result has proved, I was wise. The little girl was poor Reginald's idol, and he particularly commended her to me. He said she was of a very sensi-

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tive and reserved disposition, and the boy was far better fitted to fight his way in the world.'

While her uncle lived, Frieda had felt a sense of *home* in his house; but when after a short illness he died, scarcely two years after her father, the aspect of everything changed. Lady Katherine had not helped her husband to keep his expenses within their income, and the two children, Gerard and Maude, had been indulged in every way.. On Mr. Burnley's death, it was found that great retrenchments were necessary. Carriages and horses, and the easy luxurious life of a country gentleman, were all things of the past. Burnley Manor had to be let, and a good many things sold to meet the outstanding debts. Lady Katherine had brought her husband very little beyond her title, and her relationship to old Scotch nobility. Her brother, the Earl of Littlehales, had nothing to give her but advice to retrench at once. And her retrenchment consisted in her taking Heathfield, Downside Park: the near neighbourhood to Valehead College for Gerard, and of masters and governesses for Maude, being the chief inducements held out.

At Heathfield, therefore, Lady Katherine had contrived for five years to live what she believed to be a life of great self-denial, on some eight or nine hundred a year, and to feel herself injured by the additional burden of Frieda Burnley, her dead husband's orphan niece.

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Mr. Burnley had expressed in writing his desire that Frieda should not leave his wife and children, and he had enforced this by word to the child herself, as well as to Lady Katherine, in his last illness.

'She will be a comfort to you,' he had said to his wife. 'Let her remain, whatever happens.' While to Frieda he had said: 'Remember, you are never to leave the shelter of your aunt's roof, till you exchange a home with her and my children for one of your own.'

Poor Frieda thus felt herself in a manner pledged to stay, as Lady Katherine was pledged to keep her. To both the wishes of the dead were sacred, though there was no sympathy between them.

'My niece is not in the least a useful member of my family,' Lady Katherine would say. 'She is not a needlewoman, or practical in anything. Some young girls of eighteen or twenty are most helpful, but Frieda is seized with the idea that her *métier* is art, and I do not like to undeceive her.'

'My aunt, Lady Katherine, is the most utterly selfish person in the world,' Frieda thought. She did not *say* so, for she had at this time no friend to whom she could speak freely. She had studied at the Art School at Valehead, and when in the 'life model' class had made something akin to friendship with a little clever woman, long past her *première jeunesse*, who had to work for her old father and

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invalid sister, and who had, after years of painting landscapes, with mountains as a background and little boats on the water as a foreground, found she could not draw! It was a humiliating discovery, but it was met bravely. 'Little Miss Johnstone,' as every one called her, from the master at the Art School to the porter at the door, set herself at thirty to go through 'freehand,' and study perspective and geometry.

To go back to learn your alphabet when you believe yourself to be an advanced scholar is, it must be confessed, a trial; but Miss Johnstone proved equal to it. She had her reward. Her progress was rapid, and her still-life pictures had again and again taken prizes at the Kensington centre, while this year she had received one of the much-coveted medals.

As Frieda was turning towards the lights which were beginning to glimmer like stars along the edge of Downside Park, she came upon little Miss Johnstone, with her folio under her arm.

'Why, Miss Burnley, I did not expect to meet you so late as this! I had to go over to Eastbury with the sketch I have made of the interior of Mrs. Townley's "high-art" drawing-room. She is pleased with it, which is more than I am. What affectation there is in these rooms, to be sure! I will turn with you, for the pleasure of your company, and return by the back road to Valehead, if you will let me.'

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'Oh, I am so glad I met you!' Frieda said. 'I have just finished my picture, "Her only Friend," and I want you to criticize it.'

'I will come and see your picture with pleasure, but don't ask me for criticism; you know I am a novice myself. Five years ago I could not draw a straight line, much less could I draw a circle like Giotto. I am not sure whether I can do it now,' she added, with a laugh.

Frieda was too well used to Miss Johnstone's self-depreciation to notice it much. She said rather abruptly:

'You know I like those who know anything about painting to come down upon me; but for ignorant people who positively cannot distinguish between a light and a shadow—it is disgusting!'

'That's a strong term, my dear,' Miss Johnstone said. 'Who has been so impertinent as to come down upon "Her only Friend"?'

'You need not ask. I live with unsympathetic, dense people, who look on me as just fit to paint a signboard for the Queen's Head, at Eastbury, and nothing more.'

'Well, it requires talent to paint a signboard,' was Miss Johnstone's wise rejoinder. 'So the house next yours is taken? I see lights in the window.'

'Yes; a huge family has just arrived—their last van of furniture had only preceded them by half an hour.'

'Dear me—that is cheerful!' said little Miss John-

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stone. 'I always dislike an empty house near at hand—it is a body without a soul. Well, I am glad you have neighbours.'

'It will not make much difference to me, I expect,' Frieda said, 'whether St. Winifred's is empty or full. Now, do come in.'

'I am scarcely fit to do so,' was the reply; 'but I dare say I shall not see any one.'

'Oh no! Come up to my room and look at the picture, and I will try and get a cup of tea from Thompson.'

Frieda's room was at the top of the house, and, though low, was large, and had two windows, one looking to the front, the other towards the house over the way. All Frieda's painting materials, her easel and her palette, were by the window, and on the deep window-ledge were several pictures. 'Her only Friend' was on the easel, and Frieda struck a match and lighted the gas-burner near it, which threw out the figure of the child in strong contrast to the dark background.

'There, look at it, and make all your remarks, while I go and fetch a cup of tea.'

Frieda crossed the passage to a room of the same proportions as her own, where a bright fire was burning, and a kettle singing on the hob.

'I thought you would be coming for your tea, my dear Miss Frieda,' Thompson said. 'I have kept

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the water boiling. Miss Maude has had the school-room tea long ago. Why, where have you been? The feather on your hat is dripping wet.'

Frieda threw down her hat, and unbuttoning her ulster, said:

'Please get two cups ready, and I will come back directly. I want little Miss Johnstone to have some tea; and would you mind making her a piece of toast?'

'Very well; I have got some butter in my cupboard. But don't be long, for it's getting close upon dinner-time. It's nearly six.'

Frieda vanished, and was soon standing by Miss Johnstone's side.

'Well, what do you think of it?'

'It is the best picture you have done,' Miss Johnstone said. 'The cat's paw is not foreshortened perhaps as it ought to be, and——'

'That cat's paw!' Frieda exclaimed. 'I am doomed to hear about that. Yes, I see what you mean. Anything else?'

'The drapery of the child's ragged shawl is too angular. It should fall in rounder folds. But the face is beautiful!'

'How much may I ask for it, if Ross tells me to put a price on it—fifteen guineas?'

'Yes; but you may have to take ten.'

Frieda clasped her hands together, a favourite gesture of hers when she was greatly moved.

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'Oh! I hoped you would say twenty. I do want the money so much.'

Little Miss Johnstone turned quickly and looked at her. *She* often wanted money—to pay her rent—to pay for medicine for her father and sister—to buy clothes, food, coals—to pay the gas bill and the water company's bill; but that Miss Burnley, Lady Katherine's niece, who was looked upon as of a superior order of being, should want money—crave for it so earnestly—surprised her. Little Miss Johnstone was too refined in feeling to question her friend, or to besiege her with impertinent inquiries. So she merely said, in her simple, direct manner:

'I think fifteen guineas is quite as much as you must expect for "Her only Friend;" but, of course, Ross may be of a different opinion.'

Then Frieda put her hand upon Miss Johnstone's shoulder, and said:

'I want to get as much money as possible, to attain an object. I have told you I have a brother. He is much younger than I am; but he is living with people, relations of our mother's, who don't care about the things he cares for. They send him to a second-rate sort of school, and Mr. Hunter says he is going to put him soon into his office. George hates the idea, and he writes to me about all his troubles. I am determined to get him out of the hands of these people who cannot appreciate him, and I mean to succeed.'

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Frieda's pale cheeks were now flushed with crimson and her eyes were aglow with enthusiasm, as she said:

'Do *you* know what it is to work for one object, Miss Johnstone, and set yourself to succeed?'

'Yes,' said Miss Johnstone quietly, 'of course I do. I had a distinct object in view when I went in at the Art School for freehand, after painting pictures for years which were worthless.'

'Ah, I know that; but did you ever work for one aim—one person? I am determined George shall go to Oxford; and if I can, I mean to place him with a tutor. He is too old at fifteen to go straight to a public school for the first time, even if I could manage it. But I made up my mind when he came here for a visit last Christmas, and they all looked down upon him, that I would raise him to his right level. He is ten times better-looking than Gerard, and a hundred times cleverer, and I will do what I know our father would have wished me to do. Now, I am telling you what I have told no one else in the world. I have to bear being called stingy, and mean, and covetous, and a miser; but if I succeed, I shall not care. What will it matter then?'

Little Miss Johnstone's eyes were dim as she looked up at Frieda. She scarcely reached her shoulder as they stood together.

'I think, dear,' she said, 'we ought to be careful not to work too hard to get what *we* think is best

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for those we love. All lawful exertion for them is right; but if your brother is comfortably provided for, and if he is to go into a merchant's office, is it wise to prevent it, and upset the arrangements made for him?'

'I see you don't understand me,' said Frieda coldly. 'I thought you *would* have known what I mean—you who work—for your family. Come, let us go to Thompson's room and get some tea.'

Little Miss Johnstone's plain face was now beautiful from its earnestness.

'Dear,' she said, 'I *do* understand; but I think it is safer to leave those we love best in God's hands. We cannot really tell what is good for them; and I think some extraordinary exertion to obtain for them what is higher and better, as the world counts height and betterness, often meets with a bitter disappointment. If your brother were struggling in poverty, and had no home and no friends, it would be different; but he is really well cared for, and he may be as great and good a man in a merchant's office as at Oxford.'

Frieda was touched with the earnestness with which these words were spoken, and for the first time she bent down and kissed Miss Johnstone.

'Then if you were in my place, would you leave George to the wholesale grocery and provision merchants and humdrum Hunters, and be content to hear Maude and Gerard pity him as beneath their level?'

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'I would pray for him,' Miss Johnstone said, 'and ask for guidance every day, and I would make my will one with God's will, whatever that may be. *This* is what helps me on. And it is so comforting to feel "*our Father knows* everything."'

Frieda sighed. 'I dare say it is a comfort,' she said, 'only I have not got it;' and then Thompson's voice was heard:

'Miss Frieda, the dressing-bell will ring directly, and the two cups of tea are getting cold.'

Miss Johnstone hastily drank her tea, and ate the hot toast; and then, taking up her portfolio and wrapping herself in her old-fashioned waterproof, she ran downstairs and was gone.

'Poor little thing!' Thompson said. 'She has a hard life of it, and yet she looks as happy as a bird. I know all about her, for my sister's brother-in-law's cousin lives with them. The poor old gentleman is paralyzed, and not "all there"—asks the same question fifty times a day; and the sister is an invalid. And there's a brother who is a black sheep. And so poor little Miss Johnstone's cup is pretty full. But there, she knows how to sweeten it; and it is well for us all, my dear Miss Frieda, to find out how to sweeten our cups. There! there's her ladyship's bell, and Miss Maude calling;' and Thompson departed.

Frieda went back to her room and performed a hasty toilette. 'Dressing for dinner' was a rule in

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Lady Katherine's house, and she was quite as particular about her evening toilette now as in the days when she lived at Burnley Manor. Lady Katherine was one of those people who set great store by the outside of things; and when these are to be taken as the sign of the inside, they are not to be despised. It is only when they are valued too highly, and the outside is set above the inner life, that they are dangerous.

Frieda had exchanged her very plain black serge for a very plain white cachemere with black bows, and then she waited for the second bell to summon her to dinner. She went to the side window of her room, where her easel stood, and looking across the road, she saw lights in the house opposite, figures moving hither and thither, and she could catch the murmur of voices and a loud boyish whistle.

Frieda leaned against the window, and with the gas burner behind her she could be seen by those in the room opposite, which was a repetition of her own.

A figure could be seen there also—a slight girlish figure—bending over a chest of drawers, into which she was laying a variety of garments. Her slender fingers seemed well-fitted for their duties, and Frieda watched them with a strange fascination. At last the task seemed completed, and almost at the same moment as the bell rang in Heathfield the blind of the top window at St. Winifred's was lowered, and Frieda could see no more.

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'What a graceful pretty figure!' she said to herself as she went downstairs. 'I wonder if that was Mrs. Willoughby's eldest daughter? Gerard and Maude counted six boys and two girls—eight in all. Perhaps that girl is the eldest of the family.'

Frieda was right. The tall, graceful figure bending over the chest of drawers, with deft fingers bringing order out of chaos, was that of Cara Willoughby, the first note of Mrs. Willoughby's Octave!

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CHAPTER III.

SETTLING IN.

MRS. WILLOUGHBY'S Octave were all unconscious of the interest they had excited over the way. They were all as busy as bees settling in a new hive; they were industriously intent on finding their right niche in the house with the pretty name, which David told Cara was the chief reason that she was so anxious for her mother to take it. In these days of perpetual motion, removals are so common that they cease to be an epoch in life as in times past, before the invention of vans and the transition of furniture without packing. But although every facility is afforded for removal, it must be confessed the process is an irritating one. Tempers are sorely tried; some people are in the

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way of others; the drones are a hindrance to the workers; and a fair amount of grumbling may be expected in the best regulated 'flittings.' The Willoughbys were no exception to the rule, and the Octave was not all set in harmony. There were two or three sharps and a few discords, while the hand which generally succeeded in playing upon her eight notes with good effect was too tired to do much in that way to-night.

Mrs. Willoughby's husband had been ordered off to a distant station with that disregard to family ties which characterizes the prompt action of that great centre of the soldier's life—the War Office. A distant station, and one in no very healthy part of India—to take the eight children and his wife out there was impossible! There was not much time for consultation, for the decree had gone forth, and Major Willoughby was off before a week had passed.

A friend had advised Valehead, on account of the college for the six boys, and, having once paid a visit at Downside Park, recommended it strongly. The houses were so much larger and better for the money than those actually in Valehead. An agent was written to, and proposed two—Evesham House and St. Winifred's; and, whether for the reason which David had given or not, St. Winifred's carried the day.

The first sight of the new house on this dreary

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October afternoon was not cheerful. The mud and mire of the side-road which divided Heathfield and St. Winifred's were depressing; and though fires had been lighted for two days, and Mrs. Willoughby's servants had preceded her, nothing was very attractive or bright. The second van of furniture which Maude had watched unloading with such keen interest, ought to have been there early in the day, but some mishap on the railway had delayed it, and thus it was only an hour in advance of the family.

'I say, Cara, where's my fishing-rod? I don't see a ghost of it!'

'And, Cara, there's only one pole to the tennis set.'

'Cara, mother says she has lost her bonnet-box, and nurse declares you counted the number all right at the station.'

'So I did,' said Cara promptly; 'they were all right then. Stand out of the way, Andrew. No, you must not rummage there. What do you want?'

'My big ball with the stripes, and the——'

A push a trifle harder than was necessary sent Andrew out of the room, and he fell at the door against another knickerbockered boy Bernard, who fell backwards and hit his head against the wall. A cry, like the push, rather more emphatic than was necessary, followed, and then a whistle from

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below was heard, and some one came leaping up three stairs at a time.

'David, *do* take these children away; they are bothering me so that I scarcely know where I am.'

'Cara's so cross,' whimpered Bernard.

'She's always knocking me about,' growled Andrew.

'Come down to tea,' said David, in a merry, cheerful voice. 'I have got it all ready in the dining-room;' and he hoisted Bernard on his broad shoulders, told him to duck his head as they went under the projecting ceiling, and descended as quickly as he came up.

David was as good as his word—tea was ready. Without any fuss, he and Fraser, the boy of twelve, had unpacked a hamper brought by Mrs. Willoughby's forethought, and there was a large pot of jam, a big loaf, and a pat of butter on the table. Fraser was burning his face before the fire toasting some thin toast for his mother, while little Cosy, everybody's pet, was nestling in a large chair, hushing a doll to sleep, her own eyelids having great difficulty in keeping open. Edgar and Gilbert, who were the pair of brothers who took life easily, and agreed to hunt together for their own comfort, though not next each other in age, had each captured a book, and were lying on the recently unpacked sofa, one at each end—Edgar with the 'Boys' Own Annual,' minus one of the smart red covers; Gilbert with an

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ill-used copy of Miss Martineau's 'Playfellow,' that book which survives and surpasses in interest many more modern stories for boys.

Fraser might burn his face over the fire making the toast for his mother's tea, David might break his back hauling up hampers and boxes, and looking after everyone but himself, but what cared Gilbert and Edgar? They were two handsome, lazy boys, who kept their own interests well to the fore, and when they were pretty comfortable themselves, did not concern themselves much about other people.

'Come, one of you lazy fellows, run up and tell mother and Cara tea is ready. They must come down.'

'I'd like some strawberry jam, David,' said Cosy, in a sleepy voice.

'It's not strawberry jam, but it's the next best thing—it's gooseberry. Here, I'll put you up to the table, doll and all, next mother.'

'I am so tired, David,' said poor little Cosy. 'I don't like the new house. I want father.'

'Yes, we all want him; but so did the Queen, Cosy; and you know father is a soldier, and must go wherever he is sent. Don't tell mother you want him.'

'Mother wants him as bad as Cosy,' said the child, allowing herself to be perched upon a chair, which just brought her chin above the level of the table by the help of two music-books, and turning up her sweet face to David for a kiss.

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'Good David!' she said. 'Cosy will be a good little girl.'

'And now Mrs. Willoughby came into the room, her hands full of books, of which Fraser ran to relieve her, and Cara followed.

'How comfortable you have made it look, children!' said Mrs. Willoughby. 'I can guess who has worked hard at this. Even a footstool at my chair.'

'It is only a biscuit-box, mother,' said Fraser. 'We could not find a footstool. It was David's idea.'

Mrs. Willoughby smiled as she said:

'All bright ideas are David's.'

Something like a cloud passed over the young face at the other end of the table as these words escaped the mother's lips. Her quick eye caught it, and she added:

'Go and cut the bread, Edgar; your sister must be so tired. Nurse says she can manage very well now, and the beds have all been before the fire, so your work is over for to-night, Cara.'

Cara did not speak; she was proud to be useful, and she had what is called administrative power. Her father always said of her that she was the one of his Octave who ought to have been a soldier. Fearless and energetic, direct and practical, she was perhaps a little exacting, and expected too much from others. No one could love David or Cosy more than Cara did, but there was at times a little

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root of bitterness springing up to trouble her when she watched David's chivalrous devotion to his mother. Instances of such devotion are rare; but when the tie between mother and son is of this character, there is nothing more beautiful or more enduring on earth.

David had taken his mother under his especial protection now that his father was gone, and he was her closest and most confidential friend.

'I am very happy in my two eldest children,' Mrs. Willoughby would say; 'for Cara is so clever and practical, and David—who *can* tell what David is to me!'

Cara's voice was a little sharp at tea, as she reproved Andrew for upsetting his cup of milk, and Bernard for speaking with his mouth full. Cara taught these two little brothers everything. Gilbert had only lately been sent to a boy's school at Farnham, and the three elder brothers had been to a tutor, a clergyman who had a living in that place, and took boys to prepare for public schools. He was a connection of Mrs. Willoughby's family, and had taken the three boys on easy terms as day boarders.

All that was at an end now, and the college at Valehead served to provide for the education of the boys, in a way which would prove a compensation for some disadvantages.

'Valehead is a strange land to me,' Mrs. Willoughby said, as she looked round on the familiar

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furniture in an unfamiliar room. 'Except old General Hawkins, I know no one.'

'I dare say we shall soon have plenty of friends, Clara had replied. 'Valehead and Whitelands together make such a huge place. People are sure to call on us.'

'I don't know how that may be,' Mrs. Willoughby replied. 'Valehead has rather the reputation of unsociability.'

'Well, I am sure we can do very well without any callers,' Cara said; 'anyhow for the present, till we get the house straight. But of course the college people will call on you.'

Again Mrs. Willoughby looked doubtful.

'Your father was delighted with Dr. Maunsall, but I don't think he was very much taken with Mrs. Maunsall. He said she rehearsed all her manifold engagements, social and otherwise, till he was tired of listening to her.'

'Poor father, I can fancy how bored he was!' said David. 'He hates long-winded stories from anyone.'

Getting straight, and settling in a new house, is not done too quickly, even under the most favourable circumstances. 'Things don't get into their places by looking at them,' as the Willoughbys' nurse wisely said.

At last, however, the house assumed a more homelike air, and the four brothers had begun their daily

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walks to and from school. David at nearly seventeen was old to make his *début* in a public school, but Major Willoughby had been to Valehead to see the Head-master of the College about his sons, and the circumstance of the relation offering to take his boys was explained to him. The Head-master, true to his traditions, thought David would probably be a prig, and would require, or rather receive, a good deal of rough handling before he found his level even as a day boy. The other three were likely to prove of better material. When the entrance examinations were looked over, Dr. Maunsall was surprised to find the papers of the four Willoughbys very creditable. David's was really above the average, while Edgar's and Fraser's were quite up to it, and Gilbert passed well into the preparatory school or nursery of the college.

David had from a little boy declared he did not wish to be a soldier, while Edgar and Gilbert were both determined that war was the only profession for them, and Fraser intended to be a clergyman.

Major Willoughby often said he did not understand David, who had the lion's heart of the whole six brothers in him, turning his back on his profession so decidedly; but David had his own views on the subject, and held to them with all firmness of purpose. When he came back from the college every afternoon, his first thought was to see how his

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mother had been getting on, and to have a game of romps with Cosy and the little brothers in the so-called 'breakfast-room,' which is a feature of houses like St. Winifred's. These breakfast-rooms are on the basement story, and are apt to be very damp and dreary from want of sun. But with a large fire always burning, and open windows, the damp may be kept under, and, as in the case of the Willoughbys', a very good playroom, useful room, and storeroom for superabundant furniture is provided.

October days are short, and by the time this romp of David's was over below, the gas was lighted upstairs; and then he would go up to a small room looking across the road I have mentioned to the side of Heathfield. A window there interested him, in spite of himself. David was the last boy in the world to pry into his neighbours' concerns; but the easel in that window, and the figure standing by it, seen so distinctly for a moment or two when the gas was lighted, before the blind was drawn down, fascinated him.

'There she stands, that painting girl,' he would say to himself. 'What purpose there is in every movement! how she works on, while the old servant fidgets about, and stands behind her looking at the picture. I think she must work for her living. I admire her all the more if she does.'

That very night at tea David asked who lived in the house across the road.

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'Very grand people indeed,' was Cara's answer; 'they called on mother to-day.'

'Grand people! Did a girl come who paints?'

'David! as if that pretty child's pink and white were not natural! I hardly think even Lady Katherine would condescend to rouge.'

'Well, how should I know? There is a girl there who is standing before an easel when I go out of my room every morning, and I find her there when I come back.'

'Oh! that sort of painting,' said Edgar; 'you mean an artist, then! Why don't you call things by their right names?'

David's eyes flashed for an instant, as he said almost fiercely:

'Perhaps if I called you by your right name, you might not feel flattered.'

But the flash was momentary, and so was the angry retort. David knew how to fight the right sort of battle.

'I did not think you would all so misunderstand me. But to come to the point; who *is* the girl?—the artist, if you like.'

'We don't know,' said Cara. 'I have watched her too. I can see that window from my room also. Lady Katherine Burnley called to-day upon mother, and brought with her a very pretty girl, about fifteen or sixteen; too much grown up, but lovely—was she not, mother?'

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'Yes; she was very pretty. I do not know whether I should call her lovely; but she seemed inclined to be very friendly to you, Cara.'

'The painting girl—I beg your pardon, the artist—is a sister, then?'

'No; Lady Katherine has only two children, a boy and a girl. The boy goes to the college, but he has had a bad cold, and he has not been out of the house for a week.'

'What a muff he must be!' said Fraser. 'How old is he?'

'I think his mother said a year older than the girl, but I am not quite sure. Lady Katherine has lived in Downside Park for some years, ever since her husband died. She thought I was a widow, and indeed I do not wonder.'

'Is she a great swell?' asked Gilbert. 'I mean, does she give herself airs?'

'Airs! no; why should she?' said Cara.

'Because,' said Gilbert, 'if that young Burnley tried it on, I should be glad to show him it would not do.'

'Don't show fight till you find it is necessary, Gilbert,' said David, laughing, 'or you may feel like a little terrier who exhausts himself in yapping at a big mastiff, and gets nothing but lofty indifference in return. Tell me some more about our neighbours, mother.'

'I don't know that there is much more to tell,

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David, except that when Lady Katherine heard your father was in the 60th Rifles, she was much interested, because she had a brother in that regiment some years ago—Lord Littlehales, who was then Mr. Smallborough. She is a very handsome person, and has a pleasant voice and manner. Next time we meet, perhaps I may hear something of your "painting girl."'

The boys now left the room for their preparation in the study; and the little ones, who still had tea in the nursery, came to take their mother into the drawing-room, where she always read to them for half an hour before they went to bed. Cosy went to bed before tea, and Cara always went to sing a hymn to her while her mother read to the two little boys.

Then when the children were all disposed of, Cara and her mother were left together. Mrs. Willoughby was an excellent needle-woman, and she and Cara turned out many dainty little frocks for Cosy which would have defied the skill of a Valehead dressmaker. Cara made all her own dresses, and her mother's caps and ruffles, and was entirely independent of any help.

'Mother,' she said, when they were alone together that evening, 'do you think David has any particular desire about his future? I never can make out.'

'I think he wishes to give his life and his

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talents and *himself* to God,' Mrs. Willoughby replied.

'But he ought to think of earning his own living, and he ought to be anxious to be independent. Mother, you love David so dearly that I don't think you see what I am sure father saw—that David is all in a haze about his future. He ought now to decide what he will be, as he won't be a soldier. He might be a doctor, or a lawyer, or something definite. If he is so good, why does he not take holy orders, and look forward to being a clergyman?'

'He does not wish to be a clergyman,' Mrs. Willoughby said. 'I think, my Cara, you hardly understand David, and it is better to leave the future for a year or two. His life is so beautiful in its unselfishness, that I feel sure God will guide him aright. Ever since his confirmation he has set his face resolutely in the right way.'

'Mother, you are so fond of David you cannot see a fault in him.'

Mrs. Willoughby was silent, but she questioned in her own heart that night, was it indeed as Cara said?—love for David made her blind. She took that question, as every one of her life, to God. Surely this was the secret of the harmony of Mrs. Willoughby's Octave.

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CHAPTER IV.

LETTERS.

FRIEDA'S picture was at last ready to be carried to the dealer's in Valehead, to whom she had before sold some of her work. The cat's leg had been carefully corrected, and the folds of the ragged shawl softened and rounded.

'I can take intelligent criticism,' Frieda had said to herself, as she placed the canvas on the drawing-room piano without any remark. 'When Aunt Katherine sees it, I shall be curious to hear if she notices the change. I feel certain she won't.'

Frieda was alone in the drawing-room, standing before 'Her only Friend,' when the door opened, and Mrs. Willoughby and Cara were announced.

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'My aunt will be here directly,' she said. 'Won't you sit down?'

But Cara, after the first words of greeting, went up to the piano.

'What a lovely picture!' she exclaimed. 'I know it is yours, for I see you at work from my window, which is opposite yours, and so does David.'

'Miss Burnley will think us very curious and inquisitive neighbours, Cara,' her mother said, for she noticed Frieda's colour rise, and she did not smile as she said:

'I paint in that room because it is a good light.'

'Are these your pictures also?' Mrs. Willoughby asked, turning towards two which were hanging in the recesses by the fireplace.

'No; they were done by my uncle.'

'Ah! then yours is an inherited talent,' Mrs. Willoughby said. 'We have no one in our house who can draw at all. We are fond of music, and even my schoolboys practise every day. I am glad the road separates us, or you would hear too much of our pianos, I am afraid.'

Frieda had not time to make any rejoinder, for Lady Katherine now came in, dressed in velvet and sables, and was full of apologies for delay.

In a moment Frieda had captured her picture, rushed upstairs, put on her jacket and hat, and, having enclosed the canvas in a portfolio, she was

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half-way to Valehead before the Willoughbys' visit was over.

'I *could* not stay,' she thought. 'I dare say Aunt Katherine will call me rude, but that is nothing new. I shall never like that girl, with her air of superior goodness, and her impertinent curiosity. I shall have nothing to do with the Willoughbys; why should I? I only want to be left alone.'

Frieda arrived at the shop with her picture about four o'clock. The light was fading, and the murky sky seemed to show some signs of breaking. Everyone said it was a dreary autumn—no bright tints were on the trees, for the leaves were all so saturated with moisture that they fell from the branches too quickly to allow them to take of any beautiful shades of colour. Mr. Ross knew the young eager artist well, and always received her kindly, and took her into his studio at the back of the premises.

'It is a very pretty picture,' he said, after placing it in the best light attainable; 'but it is rather too late to-day to judge of its merits.'

'What do you think it will sell for?' Frieda asked, in a tone of suppressed excitement.

'Well, cats have been rather overdone lately; but the child's face is remarkable. Is it from the life?'

'It is idealized from the life-model at the Art School—the child who was there last term.'

'Yes; it is very good. I will frame it for you, and put it in a conspicuous position, and perhaps

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you will come again in a fortnight and hear the result; unless, indeed, I find a purchaser before then who will make you a good offer.'

'Thank you,' Frieda said, 'thank you very much. I am going to set about two pictures for the exhibition in March at the Albert Hall in Valehead.'

'You are very industrious,' Mr. Ross said, 'and you have considerable talent. You ought to be sent abroad by your friends to study in foreign galleries.'

'That is very unlikely,' Frieda said: 'it would cost so much money; and,' she added with a crimson blush, 'I would rather have the money to attain another object, than spend it on myself.'

'Then you do not love art for its own sake?'

'Perhaps not,' Frieda said coldly; and then she took up her empty portfolio, and, bidding Mr. Ross good-bye, went towards home. She had many streets to pass, and then, as she got into more aristocratic quarters, several squares and terraces to go through. The way led past Valehead College, and the boys were all returning in mud-covered jerseys and knickerbockers from football.

Frieda was so accustomed to be alone, that her loneliness did not strike her as it might have struck others who watched the youthful figure leaving the frequented thoroughfares, and striking out over the Downs, now shrouded in increasing gloom, with a swift resolute step characteristic of her to those who

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knew her. Suddenly she paused and listened—there was a sound of angry boyish voices just in front of her. A knot of boys was seen in the twilight, and one figure towered high above the rest.

'Yes, I will thrash you,' Frieda heard; 'it is the only way I can make an impression on a bully like you.' And the tall figure raised an arm with a stick, holding another boy, shorter, but of very strong build, by the collar of his jacket.

Frieda felt impelled to draw nearer, and then saw a forlorn little girl seated on the ground, with a basket of oranges and lemons she had been sent to sell to the football-players, her hat hanging back, her shawl torn, and crying bitterly.

Suddenly the uplifted hand fell, and David Willoughby said:

'No; I won't thrash you, because I feel in too great a rage, and, moreover, you are my brother —my brother! I could not have believed it of you.'

'Let go!' said Edgar Willoughby fiercely. 'What right have you to interfere?'

'Every right. I know this is not the first time you have waylaid that child, knocked over her basket, and taken her property.'

'Nonsense! a few mouldly old lemons, which we meant to pay for and pelted each other with.'

'I don't know your name,' David said, 'you three fellows, but I can soon find out. I know yours too well, Gilbert,' he added, with a ring of pathos in his

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voice. 'How many lemons did they take?' he asked, turning to the child.

'Please, sir, they didn't take 'em, they knocked 'em about to pulp; and grandmother beat me last Monday, when she saw I'd got so many damaged. Please, sir, never mind; I'll try not to cry.'

David had released his hold on Edgar's jacket, and then, as by magic, all the boys were gone, and he and the little orange-girl were left, with Frieda standing by.

'I know her,' Frieda said, advancing; 'it is little Nelly Harris. She sat for a model at the Art School last spring.'

At the sound of Frieda's voice the child sprang to her feet.

'Oh, miss, I am glad you can tell the young gentleman you know me. If he didn't believe me, I don't know what I should do.'

'It was hard to believe your story at first,' David said, 'because it seemed impossible any fellows could be so wilfully mischievous and such disgraceful bullies.'

'Please, sir, I think they meant it for a lark, and I did cry very loud on Monday, and that's why they tried it on again.'

David had been counting the bruised lemons and oranges, and now gave Nellie fourteen-pence, and told her to make haste home.

'Little Miss Johnstone knows me, sir, as well as

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Miss Frieda; she will tell you how hard grandmother is on me.'

'All right,' said David. 'I don't know who little Miss Johnstone is, but this young lady does. The next football-match on the Downs is on Saturday. If you are here then, you may be pretty sure you'll have no more tricks of that sort played off on you; and now trot home.'

Nellie curtseyed, wiped the last tear away with the corner of her shawl, and shuffled over the grass as fast as her ragged boots would let her.

David now lifted his college cap, and turning to Frieda said:

'Miss Burnley, we are neighbours; may I walk home with you?'

'Yes,' said Frieda, not too graciously, for she remembered that Cara had said David watched her painting with the same impertinent curiosity as she had done; and she added, 'I suppose we are going the same way.'

'It is getting late, and the Downs are very uneven. I suppose you know them better than I do, but I am always getting my foot into a hole. Do you like walking alone? I am sure my sister would be afraid to be out so late alone on these Downs.'

'I am never afraid,' said Frieda proudly, and then there was silence.

Presently David began:

'You said you knew that poor little girl, I think?'

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'She was our model last spring at the Art School,' was the reply.

'I found out my brothers and four other young fellows had laid in ambush for her, and amused themselves at her expense, and so I came round this way myself to-night to make sure.'

'You seemed very angry,' Frieda said. 'If what you say is true, I think that boy you were holding so fast by the collar deserved the thrashing.'

'Perhaps; but not from me. I was too much in a rage with him, and he is my brother. Besides, I am not sure whether brute force is ever of any lasting good. I know no caning I ever had did *me* good.'

'I should have thought you were always too good to need flogging,' Frieda said rather sarcastically.

David was silent again, and this time Frieda was the first to speak:

'Look at that band of light in the west, the pale daffodil colour under those inky clouds.'

'I think it is going to clear up,' David replied. 'We have had such bad weather ever since we came to Downside Park.'

'Do you like living there?' Frieda said.

'Yes; pretty well. It has been a great bother removing from Farnham. We lived there when my father had an appointment at Aldershot. It's awfully hard to lose him, you know—especially hard on my mother.'

'Do you like Valehead College?'

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'Yes; but the Head-master made it rather a favour to take me at my advanced age, and I hate favours! So I would rather have gone on as I was with my tutor.'

'*Would* you? Every boy ought to be at a public school.'

'It's the fashion to say so, I know. Your brother —Burnley—is in the same form as Edgar and Fraser.'

'Gerard is not my brother, he is my cousin—our fathers were brothers.'

'Have you any brothers?'

'One,' Frieda said; and the change in the tone of her voice struck David at once. 'I have one, and it's my hard fate never to see him, and only to know him by writing.'

'That *must* be hard,' said David, in a sympathetic tone. 'What school is he at?'

'A common sort of private school—a commercial school, I believe they call it; and he hates it, and so do I. He is a hundred times too good for it, and yet there he is, banished from the rank of life in which he was born, and—— But here we are at the gate of St. Winifred's. Good-night.' And before David could speak another word Frieda was gone.

A letter lay on the table in the hall, and snatching it up, she was hastening upstairs, when Maude called her.

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'Frieda! mother wants you.'

'Frieda,' Lady Katherine said, in the slow, deliberate tones which were so irritating to her niece, 'I do request, when I have visitors, you will not rush off as you did to-day. I cannot think what the Willoughbys' impression must have been. As my own child is not come out, and is engaged with her lessons, I *do* consider that I have a claim on your society. To say that I approve of your walking off as you do alone is impossible. I had ordered the brougham, and I intended to drive with you to pay some visits, and then I heard you had gone off with that picture.'

'I am very sorry,' Frieda said; 'I did not know you wanted me.'

She disliked being lectured in Maude's presence, especially when, as now, she came up to her in her caressing way, and said:

'Poor dear old Frieda! She *did* want to take her pretty pussy to be framed, I know.'

'Don't be absurd, Maude,' she said impatiently; 'it is so silly.' And then she was leaving the room, when Lady Katherine called her back.

'I have had a very unpleasant letter, Frieda—it really concerns you more than me. You had better take it upstairs and read it, and we will talk it over to-morrow. Of course we cannot expect a person who is not a gentleman to express himself with any degree of refinement, or to show any respect for his

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superiors. But take the letter, Frieda,' Lady Katherine repeated, holding it out from the depths of that luxurious chair where she spent so much of her life.

Frieda obeyed, and one glance at the bold, clear, even handwriting was enough. She saw that it was written by Mr. Hunter, and that it concerned George. She hastened away with it, and in the hall met Gerard.

'I say, Frieda, was that you on the Downs just now, when Willoughby made such an ass of himself? I have heard the whole story from one of the fellows who was with the two young Willoughbys. Why, it was only a joke, and the child only howled to attract attention, and get money. What's up now, Frieda? anything fresh?'

'No—yes—I don't know,' said poor Frieda, escaping upstairs at last with her letters, and shutting herself up in her own room to read them by the light of the gas which she turned up above her easel, but she was too much engrossed with the contents to draw down the blind.

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CHAPTER V.

OPINIONS.

FRIEDA read her brother's letter first, and her lip quivered, and her face was very pale as she did so.

'DEAR FRIEDA,' it began,—'I am getting so sick of my life here that I am going to cut it. I hope you won't mind much; but I know you hate my being here—a day-boy at a common school like old Bigsby's! Hunter is rich enough to send me to Eton, if he chose; and if he thinks I am going to perch on a stool in his stuffy office, and write about salt pork and iced mutton all day, he is mistaken, for I won't do it. If you could send me a little money, I should be thankful. I am going to cut *this*, anyhow.—Your affectionate brother,

'GEORGE BURNLEY.'

Frieda stood with the letter in her hand without moving for a few minutes. Then two or three large tears dropped on the paper, which she brushed hastily away, and cleared her vision for the perusal

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of Mr. Hunter's letter. It was short, but to the point—business-like and sensible.

'MADAM,—When I consented to undertake the charge of George Burnley for my dead sister's sake, I intended to treat him as a son, and expected from him a son's duty.

'I regret to say that since his visit to your ladyship last Christmas the young fellow has been very unsettled, disobedient to orders, insolent when spoken to, and gives himself stuck-up airs, which don't suit *me* nor my wife.

'I am a tradesman, and not ashamed to say so. As a tradesman, there is a first-rate opening for George; but if he shirks this, I have done with him. Your ladyship must write him to this effect, and the sooner the better.—Your obedient servant,

'JOHN HUNTER.

'P.S.—My wife is much hurt at the boy's conduct, for, woman-like, she took kindly to him. She thinks his sister has had a hand in this matter, and filled the boy's head with rubbish about trade, and such like.—J. H.'

Frieda's face was not calm and sorrowful now. No tears fell on Mr. Hunter's letter. She crushed it in her hands, and stamped her little foot in her anger.

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'Oh, what shall I do?' Frieda exclaimed aloud. 'How can I suffer such gross impertinence? Aunt Katherine is right. We cannot expect anything better from a wholesale provision merchant. The notion of calling this man uncle—my mother's half-brother,—my sweet, gentle, lady-like mother. All the vulgarity must have gone to *him*, and all the gentle birth to her. How dare he speak to me like that, and of George as if he were a shop-boy! Dear George, so handsome and clever! it is a terrible fate. I wonder how much money I have in that box!' and Frieda fitted a key to a little wooden box, and began to count out her hoard.

'One, two, three ten-pound notes; four five-pound notes, and eleven sovereigns—sixty-one pounds. How far will that go? If I could get him here as a day-boy at the college! But then where could he live? Not in this house, for they all call him vulgar, and would make him miserable.'

And then Frieda replaced the money in the box, and covering her face with her hands, cried long and bitterly.

Poor child! She was oppressed with the seeming inequalities of life, and yet her proud and self-reliant spirit refused to take comfort from the right source—refused to acknowledge Him Who would have smoothed the rough places for her, and made the bitter sweet. Her father had read her character aright as a child, and no one else had taken

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the trouble to do so. A gentle influence might lead Frieda where anything like coercion would fail.

Possessed with one idea—that she and her brother were made little of, and, as she would have said, despised—she determined to do what she could to rise independently of her relations, and show that there was something in her and in him which no adverse circumstances could prevent their showing —that they were at least equal to their cousins, if not, as she believed, superior.

Frieda's was precisely that type of character which has, with all its firmness and strength of purpose, a certain sensitiveness, the outcome of which is weakness. Frieda would have been very much surprised had she been told that this weakness made her selfish, but it was nevertheless true. She believed she was living for her brother, while in reality she was pleasing herself by her untiring efforts to take him from his home with the Hunters. An ambition to surprise Lady Katherine with her success, and the proud anticipation of that time, were very much mixed with the deep affection she really felt for her brother—the only near tie which she possessed—whose joyous happy childhood had been such a delight to the mother whom she could well remember, and the father whom she had so passionately loved.

It was misery to Frieda, during the fortnight that

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George had spent at Heathfield, in the last Christmas holidays, to notice certain little failures in manners, too small to be spoken of, but quite sufficiently marked to take off her pleasure in having him as a guest at her aunt's house.

Then, in matters of dress, poor George was at the stage when the public schoolboy, if he gives up his Eton jacket, wears a black coat, if not with tails, of an evening, and a black or white tie. George came down to dinner in a dark grey suit, which might have passed had he not added to it a black and orange tie! Frieda saw her aunt's nearly imperceptible gesture of amusement or contempt, and Gerard, who sat next him, made as marked a contrast as it was possible to imagine to his cousin. And yet how handsome George was, with well-cut features, and a bright, fresh complexion, and deep violet eyes, inherited from his mother, with curling lashes. As clearly as if the words had really reached her ear, poor Frieda had interpreted her aunt's appraising glance:

'Handsome, but common-looking.'

Then there was the pain of George resenting her own little hints in private—about laying his knife and fork so far from each other when he finished his dinner; of a noisy scraping of his plate with the spoon when he had eaten some cabinet pudding: and, worse than all, his saying, when the grave parlour-maid, who had the manners of a butler,

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of which she was very proud, took his plate, 'Some more of that, please.'

To see how Lady Katherine helped him to the tiniest piece which was possible, was a lesson in itself; but George was perfectly unconscious of this, and said:

'Thank you; it's an awfully good pudding.'

Some sisters, placed in Frieda's position, would have ignored their brother, left him to get on as he could, and had as little to do with him as possible. That was the course Lady Katherine advised, not in so many words, but by side-hints as to the fitness of things, and the impossibility of those brought up without social advantages associating with others who had them in full measure; and nothing could have strengthened Frieda's determination more than these insinuations.

Nevertheless, here she was now at a standstill. George and Mr. Hunter had come to that point when, without great concessions on the boy's part, he would be glad to give up the charge of him; while George himself openly declared his intention of cutting the whole concern.

What was Frieda to do? The money she had collected would not go far towards the object she had in view; and then little Miss Johnstone's words returned:

'I think we ought to be careful not to work too hard to get what *we* think is best for those we love.'

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'I wish she were here now!' Frieda exclaimed aloud as the dressing-bell rang, and she felt she had not a moment to lose if she were to write to George that evening; for the letters were always put in a box on the table in the hall, to be cleared at half-past seven, when the boy who did the rough work of Lady Katherine's household ended his duties for the day by taking them to the post.

Frieda opened her writing-case and wrote a few words, telling her brother to do nothing rashly; that she would write to him again in a day or two, and, if possible, send him some money, or tell him of some plan which would release him from what she felt must be intolerable.

The letter was addressed and stamped just as the second bell rang. Frieda was always very swift at her toilet, and to-night she was scarcely a minute behindhand — long enough, however, for Lady Katherine to say:

'I wish you would try to be punctual, Frieda.'

The dinner was not a very bright hour at any time. Maude and Gerard wrangled about trifles; Lady Katherine mildly reproved them; while Frieda was generally silent.

This evening the Willoughbys were again brought forward as a topic of discussion.

Gerard told the story of the orange-girl, and of David's interference, and gave out that a good many fellows in the college had already discovered that

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Willoughby was a prig, and thought himself above other people. His own brothers said he thought a great deal too much of himself. 'What right had he to seize his brother by the collar in that way before the other fellows?'

'Every right,' said Frieda, in a low voice. 'I don't see how any boy could quietly stand by and allow a little girl to be robbed.'

'Robbed! what nonsense! They only made nine-pins of her fusty old lemons for fun.'

'I hope, dear Gerard,' Lady Katherine said, 'you will be careful not to get mixed up with any quarrels, especially with our neighbours.'

'I was not near the place,' Gerard said; 'it was Frieda.'

'I think all the Willoughbys very nice,' said Maude, 'especially the two boys next the eldest son. Won't you ask them in some evening, mother? *Do*, darling mother!'

'My dear Maude, we must not be too hasty. Although I have satisfied myself about the Willoughbys' connections, and find they are *quite* nice, all the eight children running in and out would be a nuisance; and it would be so difficult to check it when it had once been begun. Now, darling, after dinner I want you to play the duet with Frieda, and let me hear if you know it.'

'Oh, I hate that duet, mother; and Frieda does not know the treble, and it puts me out.'

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'I really think, Frieda, you might take the trouble to practise that duet with Maude. It is so *very* little I require of you, and your music lessons were very expensive ones from Signor Montabello.'

Frieda's answer was cold and short:

'I know the duet perfectly, and Maude knows that it is impossible to play the treble to a bass that has scarcely a note right.'

'It's *not* the notes,' said Maude, pouting; 'it's the stupid time—that horrid catching time. *No one* can play it.'

'You ought to try,' said Gerard. 'You strum all kinds of polkas or things when you ought to be practising.'

'Gerard, do not speak to your sister in that way. It is most ungentlemanlike,' said Lady Katherine. 'I wish to speak to you alone, Frieda, in the drawing-room,' she continued, addressing Frieda, as she swept out of the dining-room with the air of *La Grande Duchesse*.

'What is to be said to this person, Mr. Hunter, Frieda? I am sure I don't know. If your brother quarrels with him, it is simply quarrelling with his maintenance. The folly of his conduct is only to be equalled by its ingratitude. This person is wealthy. Your dear uncle told me that he had amassed a large fortune, and that commerce was the only thing that George was fitted for; and, indeed, you must acknowledge that this opinion is a correct one.'

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'Indeed, I acknowledge nothing of the kind,' said Frieda hotly. 'George is equal to anyone in looks and talents. He is in the highest form in the school at Broxholme, and you seem to forget he is barely sixteen.'

'I really did not know his age,' said Lady Katherine indifferently. 'The school you speak of is a commercial school, and to attain a high place there is not saying much. I think the only course for me and for you, my dear Frieda, is to write to Mr. Hunter, and tell him that we leave the matter in his hands. That is what *I* intend to do; and if you ask my advice, it is that you write candidly to your brother, and point out that if he is so foolish as to quarrel with these people he must trust to himself and his own exertions. I have nothing to give him. My expenses are very heavy,' Lady Katherine said, stroking the folds of her velvet dress with her long white fingers, where several costly diamonds were sparkling—'*very* heavy,' she repeated, 'and I only wish the sacrifice I make in carrying out the wishes of my dear husband met with a better return.'

'What do you mean, Aunt Katherine?' Frieda said.

'I mean—to speak candidly, my dear—that I have treated you as a daughter, and—well—have not received a daughter's love in return. But it is a painful, *deeply* painful subject. Let us say no more.'

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'Yes, Aunt Katherine, we must say a great deal more. I am not ungrateful to you for my food and clothes, and the education, such as it is, that you have given me. But I deny that you have done more than this. You make me feel every day I *am* a burden—that I am dependent. I have no one in the world to love but George. He belongs to my happy childhood, and——'

Frieda was dangerously near crying now, and she stopped a moment.

'Do not make a scene, Frieda, and agitate me; it is so distressing.'

'Aunt Katherine, I don't wish to make a scene. I have gone on year after year silently—you know I have; but oh! I have been so desolate. I have my poor little pictures to fall back upon, and I have seen in them a way of rescuing George from his present distasteful life; but you can't think what it was to me to see him in this house, scoffed at and looked down on, when I knew how really superior he was to——'

'I don't think, my dear Frieda, you can make a hero of poor George. I grant he has a fine physique, and a certain good-natured charm about him; but he is sadly deficient in the refinement which we naturally look for in our rank of life.'

'And why?' Frieda said indignantly. 'Because he has never had the chance of associating with those who *are* in that rank.'

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'My dear, you seem to forget that Mr. Hunter was your poor mother's brother.'

'Her half-brother,' Frieda said. 'My grandmother was poor and friendless, and married Mr. Hunter's father when he had other children by his first marriage. My mother was many years younger than this brother, and oh! you know what she was. My father always called her his Rose without thorns, she was so perfect.'

'My dear Frieda, all this is very far from our point, which is, *what* am I to say to Mr. Hunter?'

'I have heard from George. He is very unhappy and miserable. I have written to him to tell him to try and stay where he is till—till I can make some plan.'

'Your brother cannot be received here, Frieda. I must be very decided on that subject.'

'Do you suppose, Aunt Katherine, that I imagined you would take George, though——'

Maude now appeared, and Frieda stopped at once.

'What are you talking about?' she said. 'I hope you have not been vexing my darling mumsie. She looks so flushed—the sweet!'

'You are very considerate, my pet. Frieda and I have been obliged to discuss a little business matter. Now she is ready to play that lovely duet with you.'

But Frieda was gone.

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'I want a friend!' she exclaimed, as she shut herself into her bedroom. 'I want a friend. Oh that I were like Cara Willoughby, with a home and a mother. But I won't let them see how they hurt me. I will go and play the duet, and treat them as they deserve, and to-morrow I will go and see little Miss Johnstone, and find out about that place in London where pictures are really valued at their right price. If only I had some one I could tell about George!'

Is it not wonderful—or rather, I ought to say, would it not be wonderful, if it were not so common that those who want a friend to sympathize and guide with wise counsel, those who are longing for it, and feel the terrible weight of unshared burdens, will not go to One Who is near, and ready, and willing to give all for which the soul hungers? Frieda knew nothing of the sweetness of that Friend's ready help. Her ears were closed to His voice; her heart made no response to His invitation —'*Come!*'

The key-note to the melody of her life was wanting, as to so many young lives, who in all their early vigour and freshness, with youth and youthful powers undimmed, do yet feel that there is something needed, that there is discord instead of harmony, and that the immortal part within can only be satisfied with immortal food.

Self-reliant and sensitive, Frieda had often a sense

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of loneliness and isolation; and when a trouble like this about her brother pressed on her, the bitterness was increased by the feeling that 'no one cared.' Frieda had not yet learned where to cast her care—on One Who cared for her.

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CHAPTER VI.

CONTRASTS.

'MOTHER,' Cara said that evening, 'I think I should like to ask that girl who painted the picture to take a walk with me. David says he thinks she would like it. Shall I go over to-morrow afternoon and ask her? I think she leads a lonely sort of life. Lady Katherine drives out in the brougham, and the child—or rather the young lady, for she is not a child—is at her lessons all day. David said he met the poor little artist coming back from Valehead alone, when it was so dark. Mother, shall I ask her?'

Mrs. Willoughby looked up from her work and said:

'I don't feel quite sure whether Lady Katherine

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Burnley would like us to make any overtures of friendship. Perhaps they ought to come from her.'

'Now I call that very disappointing of you, mother. You used to scold me at Farnham for not being friendly and sociable, and now when I have taken a fancy to a girl you throw cold water on my little plan. I am not one bit afraid of Lady Katherine, and I will ask her leave if you think it is right and proper. Here is David, now; you shall hear what he says.'

David had been reading hard all the evening, and now came to say good-night.

'You look very tired, David; what is the matter?'

'Oh! nothing. I find the new ways of Valehead College rather stiff, that is all.'

'Edgar and Fraser seem to be taking it easy,' Cara said; 'why don't you?'

'Do not overtax your strength, my dear David,' his mother said. 'Your father would not wish you to do so.'

'Oh! not I,' he said gaily, resuming his usually light manner. 'I am all right.'

Not one word did David say of the little scene on the Downs with the orange-girl; but his mother's quick eye had soon detected that there was something wrong between Edgar and David.

'Now, David, listen to my proposal. I want to

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make friends with the painting girl, and mother does not like it.'

'The best thing you could do, I should say,' was David's answer. 'She is not at all after the usual type of young ladies, I can tell you. I dare say she will snub you first, Cara; but you can bear that, you know.'

'I ought to be able to bear it,' was Cara's reply, 'considering how well trained I am in this by my brothers. But to-morrow, the moment dinner is over I shall try my fate, or write her a little note in the morning. Which will be best, David?'

'Oh, I would go and see her. It is less formal.'

'Then that is settled, as *you* approve, Mother is conquered. She is sure to say yes now. But I must say good-night, for I am very sleepy.'

Cara gathered together all her property, work-basket, books and writing-case, and then kissing her mother and David, she departed, saying:

'Don't sit up too long, mother: remember how tired you were yesterday.'

When Cara was gone, Mrs. Willoughby waited for David to speak. She never questioned him; his confidence in her was always voluntary.

He came and leaned against the chimney-piece near her chair, and looking down at her, he said:

'I had a row on the Downs with Edgar to-day, mother. I lost my temper with him, and was on

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the point of thrashing him, only I stopped in time.'

'David! What was it about?'

'Well, I don't want to tell tales; it is over now, and I don't think it will happen again. Only you see, mother, it is unfortunate that so soon after my father's leaving us, I should have come to a regular row with the boys. It will weaken my influence.'

'Yes,' Mrs. Willoughby said, 'for a time perhaps. But only for a time.'

'It is awfully disappointing, mother,' David went on, 'to find such a large proportion of mean-spirited fellows in a public school like this. But my two brothers ought to be able to resist being led on into bullying by others.'

'Who were they bullying?'

'A poor little girl with a basket of oranges and lemons; but I dare say Gilbert will tell you all about it if Edgar does not. They are good fellows at the bottom, though they have been a bit restive of late.'

'Perhaps, dear David,' his mother said, 'the boys feel you are too near them in age to assert any authority over them. It will require care. It must be influence; leading, not driving.'

'Of course,' David said; 'you always put things in the right light, you darling mother! I have made up my mind to read hard, and have a hit at one of the scholarships next year. I shall be seventeen in

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a few weeks. Dr. Maunsall told me the other day that he thought I was very well on in classics, though behindhand in mathematics. He said fellows who had private tutors generally were. If I got a scholarship, you see, I might go to Oxford. I *should* like to get there, but I know with so many boys my father's hands are full, to say nothing of yours.'

'Yes; but we would not have it otherwise,' Mrs. Willoughby said. 'You know, David, I could not spare one note of my octave. About your work, dear David,' she said, rising and putting her hand through her boy's arm, 'do not press too hard for success. I mean, do not look too much at the one point of personal distinction. Oxford honours are great, but the honour of using the gifts God has given us for Him is greater.'

'I think that is what I want to do, mother,' the boy said resolutely. 'I am not afraid of talking to you, or that you will call me a prig, but I think I do want to do something for the great untaught people, who ought to be cared for and raised. I do want to defend the weak, and fight for the oppressed.'

'Yes, David, I know it,' his mother said, 'and I sympathize with you in every hope and aspiration. But take one day at a time, and fight your own battles nobly and well: then when you have reached manhood you will be braced for the wider field which God may open out for you.'

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With a loving kiss mother and son parted, and David's 'You always understand me' was sweet music in Mrs. Willoughby's ear.

Mrs. Willoughby was an old-fashioned mother. Every night she went the round of her children's beds, and looked at them as they slept. Cara and Cosy, the first and last notes of her octave, slept in her room, and the boys were disposed of in pairs. The youngest boys, Andrew and Bernard, lay in the first sweet sleep of early childhood, side by side in their little beds. Bernard was still babyish enough to stable by his bed a wooden horse with a stubbly tail, which he had loved through the changes and chances of years, and which had descended to him —not from Andrew who despised such toys—but from Gilbert, who had still a secret pleasure in taking a 'scuffle,' as they called it, astride 'Flossy,' on the boards of the passage which ran between the line of bedrooms on the top story of St. Winifred's.

Andrew was of a studious turn. His pile of lesson-books was on a shelf by his head, and his sleeping face was serious, not smiling like his brother's. A photograph of their fine soldier-like father was in every room, and Mrs. Willoughby always gave the picture also a good-night smile. Across the passage was the room occupied by Edgar and Gilbert. They, too, were both asleep, but there was a troubled expression on Edgar's face, on which his mother looked anxiously.

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'What is it, I wonder?' she said to herself. 'There is something I do not know. But there is One Who knows, and I must ask Him to keep my poor Edgar safe.'

Gilbert was also sound asleep, his head burrowed in the pillow, and there was nothing to be seen but a mass of thick curls, which his mother stroked gently and lovingly. In a little slip of a room next David's was Fraser. He was wide awake, and said:

'Mother, I have been waiting for you.'

'What is it, Fraser?'

'Mother, I know David did not tell you all about that row on the Downs. He behaved splendidly; and Edgar has such a horrid, mocking way when he speaks to him. Of course David was right.'

'Right in principle—yes, dear Fraser; but even righteous indignation has its limits.'

'Mother, you would never have forgotten David's face when he kept himself back from thrashing Edgar. It seemed to shine in the twilight. Father looked like it the day when he seized that man in the road at Farnham, who was kicking a poor woman. Mother, I don't wish to be a sneak, but I do think Edgar sets Gilbert up to behave badly to David. And I can tell you there are not many elder brothers who would take it as he does.'

'Fraser, I hope my children will all try to keep peace, especially now, when your father is gone

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from us. My octave ought all to be in tune. I don't think my F. is often sharp,' she added, kissing the boy, who sprang up and threw his arms round her.

'If we were all like David,' he said, 'there would be no trouble.'

'Every note has its own sound to give,' said his mother, 'and has to take care that it is in tune, and rings clear and true to itself and the others.'

'Yes,' Fraser said, and then with a drowsy 'good-night, mother,' he was asleep almost before she had closed the door.

David's gas was still burning, and his mother put her head in at the door.

'Oh, David, not reading now!'

'Nothing that will hurt me,' was the reply; and she saw his English and Greek Testaments lying open, side by side, on the table. 'Mother, look across to the window in Heathfield. I watch the shadow of that painting girl on the blind. Look, don't you see the corner of her easel, and there's her hand moving up and down. She can't be painting by gas light, but I think she must be sketching in the outline of another picture. I feel sorry for her. I know she has a time of it with those relations. She told me of a brother she cared so much for, and when she spoke of him her voice was not cold and hard as it is sometimes, but full of sympathy. Then they ought not to let her walk alone over the Downs

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in the dark, for it was almost dark before we got home. Let Cara make friends with her, if she will; it is not often that Cara is so ready to stretch out a hand to anybody.'

Mrs. Willoughby laughed.

'Why, David, you are really awakening in me an interest in the painting girl, as you call her. Yes; I will let Cara follow her own inclination and yours also. But now, do go to bed, like a good boy, and do not wait for the light to be put out over the way.'

'All right,' David said, with a short irrepressible yawn; 'and take care, mother, you practise what you preach, for you look dreadfully tired.'

Little Miss Johnstone's house was in a very out-of-the-way part of Valehead. Here the brave little woman could get through an astonishing amount of work, and yet find time to minister to those who were in greater need than herself. It was rather the fashion in Valehead to excuse all shortcomings, whether social or religious, under the plea of want of time. Everyone led a life of hurry and effort to crowd into an hour what could not possibly be done in it. Everyone had a certain amount of afternoon teas to get through, lectures to attend, concerts to patronize, acquaintances to make. Valehead was too wide and too popular for the manufacture of *friends*. In the manufacture of more

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ephemeral acquaintances it was more successful. People rushed hither and thither, and bowed and smiled right and left, cutting those on the left with pleasure if it answered better to cultivate those on the right.

There were numerous churches, and huge congregations streamed out of them, week-days and Sundays. There were subscription lists, and charity bore under its beautiful name a huge burden of bazaars, and concerts, and the like. This was the life of the masses of the Valehead population; but for the pure bright stream of the river which maketh glad the hearts of the faithful, and has its source in the city not made with hands, we look in vain in the high places of the rich and the fashionable. And yet we must guard ourselves against judging all, by one sweeping judgment. In Valehead, as elsewhere, the faithful, loyal, and honest ones were to be found in every rank, and some lights were set on a hill, and could not be hid. Still, perhaps the very brightest light which shone in the neighbourhood was that which little Miss Johnstone kept so steadily burning in her modest home.

It had been a weary day with her. She had been working at the interior of the 'high-art' drawing-room, which was unlike most of her pictures—more of a task than a pleasure. The two little rooms in the third of a row of houses, opening one from the other, were connected by folding-doors. In one of

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them the artist worked, in the other those whom she supported lived—the poor half-imbecile father, who asked the same question fifty times a day; and the much-tried and querulous invalid sister, whose faded youth and beauty were as pathetic a sight as one could well imagine. The only thing which seemed to divert her from her troubles and griefs was an unlimited supply of books; and it was one of Miss Johnstone's duties to exchange the volumes at the library, to which she subscribed for her sister's benefit.

It was but poor food for the mind which Amy Johnstone relished; and if her sister ventured to introduce any more solid or wholesome reading, she was met with reproaches and tears. The poor faded beauty lived in an unreal world with her heroes and heroines, and often made herself the supposed actor in the scenes of gay and fashionable life, of which the stories treated. If little Miss Johnstone had worked for thanks, she would long ago have given it up. To all outward seeming, neither father nor sister were particularly grateful to her. They grumbled at the food which her hand had provided; they grumbled at the house, the rent of which she paid. They even grumbled at the time she spent over her pictures, very seldom admired them, and were decidedly never proud of them.

It had been a very weary day—the day after David Willoughby's encounter with the college boys on the

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Downs — when little Miss Johnstone wiped her palette and her brushes, and prepared to go out to take her pastime, as she called it.

Ideas of pleasure differ. To a great many people in Valehead it consisted of tennis in the summer, played on velvet lawns, under the shade of spreading trees; or water-parties down the river, and picnics on the banks; or in winter of musical afternoons, and tea and talk; or dinner, when course after course lengthened the process indefinitely; or evening parties, when heated dancers were cooled with ices; or crowded lecture-rooms, where some man of note in science and literature condescended to sharpen the provincial wits of the Valehead thirsters after knowledge.

But it was to none of these things that little Miss Johnstone went for recreation, as she took a small basket from the staff and pillar of her daily life—a stalwart, rosy-cheeked maid-servant, whom she had trained from her childhood—and went out into the street turning towards a still more unfashionable quarter to a labyrinth of alleys and courts known, or rather unknown, to thousands who passed near it every day, by the inappropriate name of 'Queen's Court.'

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CHAPTER VII.

INTERIORS.

LITTLE Miss Johnstone spent an hour or two of that sombre autumn afternoon in Queen's Court.

Nelly, the orange-girl, who had been the model at the Art School, was a great favourite of hers, and the child returned the affection with absolute devotion.

It was rather difficult to help Nelly, by reason of her old grandmother. She had a decided preference for the Crown public-house in Queen's Court; and as Miss Johnstone preached and practised temperance, she looked upon her as a natural enemy.

It often made Miss Johnstone's heart ache to think how many blows and bruises Nelly would be spared if only the little 'noggins of gin' could be given up. To supply the money to procure these strong potations, little Nellie had to trudge about with her basket of oranges and lemons: and, as we know, the college boys had on the previous evening attacked her 'for fun,' which 'fun' was rather doubtful pleasure to little Nellie. Miss Johnstone

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had tried to establish a coffee-room in Queen's Court for some time, and had at last succeeded. By the help of one or two rich neighbours, one of the tenements in the Court had been taken, and made attractive by an artist's hand. The walls were painted in bright scenes of sea and stream and trees, after the fashion of small country-side inns in Italy and France. Miss Johnstone had great faith in the attractive power of bright colours; and with the help of some cheerful crimson curtains at the window, and a table covered with red cloth, the coffee-room began to be a formidable rival to the Crown.

An old woman, cleanly and brisk, though past hard work, slept above the coffee-room and kept it in order. She had to be stirring betimes to provide the coffee for the men and women in Queen's Court, who left it early to gain their daily bread. Amongst them were many charwomen, hucksters, chimney-sweeps, and keepers of old-clothes shops; and here, indeed, it may be said, little Miss Johnstone's light burned brightly.

She had her palette and brushes in a basket this afternoon, as a leaky pipe had defaced one of her frescoes, and she was standing on some wooden steps, with her brush in her hand, when a voice near said:

'I have been to your house to look for you, and so I came down here. I wanted to speak to you.'

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'My dear,' exclaimed little Miss Johnstone, 'what would Lady Katherine say about your coming here?'

'I am sure I don't know, and I don't care. How *can* you take so much trouble over a place like this? What do you do it for?'

'I can't stop to answer that question; the light is fading so fast, and I want to finish this bridge. The damp has swept away my pretty Pont St. Louis, and all the rocks are turned into blurred mist. I find they are too far gone to mend, so I must make a clean sweep and put it right next time; but I can restore the water.'

'It is very pretty,' Frieda exclaimed; 'really, that cornfield opposite looks as if it had a blaze of sunshine on it.'

'A free use of yellow, I admit. Something bright is wanted here.'

'And there is my child, I declare,' Frieda said; 'what an excellent likeness!'

'Yes, Miss,' remarked the woman who had the care of the house, and who now came in from the back kitchen where she had been busy washing up cups; 'isn't it natural! Why, you might pick the oranges out of the basket, pretty near: and the child is a perfect picture, only she don't often look as clean and tidy as that, poor lamb! It's a shame how that child is out on the tramp with her basket, and she gets nothing but kicks for her pains—never no halfpence.'

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'She used to be our model at the Art School,' Frieda said. 'If she had not had that fall she might have been engaged again.'

'Ah! that fall! The child has had many since: only that happened to cut her forehead open. She'll take the scar to her grave. More's the shame to them that did it. Why, here she is!' and in the doorway stood little Nell.

Her basket was empty, and she had sold all the oranges, except two battered ones which had escaped the fray the night before.

Nelly's face was beaming with delight at the sight of Miss Johnstone, who, stepping lightly down from her elevation, greeted the child with—

'Well, Nelly, why didn't you come for your lesson last night?'

Nelly's face clouded over. She looked at Frieda, who said:

'She was set upon by some boys on the Downs, and teased in a disgraceful way.'

'It was only done for a lark,' the child said, 'and the young gentlemen paid up. Only I was so shook and cried so, I couldn't come, please, Miss Johnstone.'

'Well, you must come on Sunday afternoon, and we will have our lesson then. How is your grannie?'

Nelly shook her head.

'She was in a rage last night, but she will be all right when she sees my basket empty to-day.'

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'You may come in and help wash up a bit, Nell,' said Mrs. Morris, 'if granny will let you; and you can have a cup of coffee and a roll for your pains.'

'Yes, that is quite right, Mrs. Morris,' Miss Johnstone said; 'and now I am ready to walk back with you,' she added, turning to Frieda.

'Only one minute,' she said, as they passed up the alley. 'I must just see how a poor little child is, at number six, whose face was burned last week.'

A little figure, bandaged over neck and cheek, now toddled to the door, while a forlorn-looking woman with an infant in her arms, came from the room.

'Why, the little chap is wonderful better, Miss,' she said. 'When the doctor came he said you'd been and done up the burns that clever that he wouldn't touch them.'

'That's a compliment to my surgery,' Miss Johnstone said. 'Keep the bandage well over them for some days yet.'

So she passed on, nodding right and left, till they came to the Crown, which stood at the entrance of the Court. There two or three men were lounging with pipes in their mouths, and to Miss Johnstone's 'Good-afternoon,' returned a surly grunt, not attempting to raise their hats or caps.

'Enemies,' Miss Johnstone said, 'for the present,

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but they will come round. They think my coffee-room is an innovation, poaching on other people's preserves. Now then, dear,' she continued, 'what do you want that I can do for you?'

'I don't know whether you *can* do anything; but it is about George, my brother. He is going to leave Mr. Hunter, our uncle; he cannot put up with such drudgery any longer. I thought if I could pay for a room for him he might be able to attend the University College classes, and fit himself for a doctor. I believe I *can* pay for it. I have already sixty-seven pounds in hand, and there is my picture at Ross's; and if I could see him often I know it would inspire me to get on with my painting. I am not afraid of myself, with an object like this in view.'

Miss Johnstone was silent, even after Frieda had thus laid her wishes before her. When at last she did speak, she said:

'I am not sure that you would be right to do this.'

'Not right?' Frieda exclaimed. 'You work for your father and sister—you work for those dirty and ungrateful people in Queen's Court: why should I not work for my only brother, the only one I have to love? I *am* disappointed in you. I thought you would say you would help me, and not throw cold water over my plans like this!'

'My dear, be patient with me. There is no work,

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however hard, that we should shrink from if God appoints it. He says, "As thy day, so shall thy strength be;" but He does not promise the strength to bear burdens of our own choosing. Your brother is in the way of gaining an honourable living. Are you justified in encouraging him to give up a certainty for an uncertainty?'

'Yes; I think I am. I hate the idea of my brother developing into a common tradesman. I might even grow to be ashamed of him.'

'Ah,' said little Miss Johnstone, 'then pride is the root of the whole matter.'

Frieda's hand had been in Miss Johnstone's arm up to this moment; she now withdrew it, and said coldly:

'We need not say any more now. I was going to propose that you should give my brother a room in your house, and that I should pay for it, and for his board. I thought it might have been a help to you.'

'It would have been a help, and I would offer your brother my spare room, and only accept remuneration for his board, if I thought I should, by so doing, be a real friend. Even now, if the worst comes to the worst, and your brother leaves Mr. Hunter's, I would take him in, if there was any difficulty at Downside Park. Still, I hope it may not come to this.'

'It will come to it,' Frieda said. 'If George has not left Mr. Hunter by this time, I am certain he *will* do so.'

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'What profession does he want to follow?' Miss Johnstone asked.

Frieda was silent, for it was a fact that George and never shown any anxiety as to a profession. He hated trade, but it was by no means certain that he loved work. He had not any particular bent—even his sister was obliged to confess this; but that he had a decided objection to a provision-merchant's office was clear enough.

'Has he any great desire to be a doctor?'

'I don't know. I am sure he would like it better than Mr. Hunter's office, and a doctor's is a gentlemanlike profession. But,' Frieda said, 'it is no use saying any more now; I have written to George to beg him to pause. I hope he *may* at least do that, and this will give me time.'

'I am glad you have asked your brother to wait; he may think better of it: and I should really hope he would be too manly to take your earnings for the gratification of a whim. Here we are close to my home; will you come in and look at my "interior," and see poor Amy?'

'I shall be very late, I am afraid, for the days are so short. No—I must not come in, thanks.'

'You are not angry with me?' Miss Johnstone said; 'you confided in me, and I was in all sincerity obliged to tell you what I thought.'

'Yes,' Frieda said; 'I know you are very honest and sincere; tell me your name. I have seen your

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initials on your pictures, but I don't really know your name. It is so odd; everyone calls you——'

'Little Miss Johnstone,' she said, with a merry laugh. 'Well, there is not much of me, certainly. My name is a quaint one, and Amy thinks it very ugly. Penelope. I have shortened it into Pennella, the Italian for paint-brush, for I have taken the liberty to make the word feminine to suit me, you know. Call me that, or anything you like. If you will not come and see my "interior," good-bye.'

'Good-bye,' Frieda said. 'Pennella—I like that name. But just tell me what makes you go into Queen's Court, and take so much trouble to paint the walls of that little coffee room? I can't understand it.'

'You will understand it one day, dear,' was the answer, 'when you know how love sweetens and ennobles the poorest service done for love's sake.'

'Love's sake,' Frieda echoed.

'Ah, yes! for *His* sake who loves *best*,' were little Miss Johnstone's last words, which kindled a light in her eyes Frieda wondered at, as she took that light with her into the narrow dim passage behind her.

A pale face had been watching the two figures at the little iron gate during their parting conversation. Amy Johnstone had crept from her sofa, and had been peeping over the blind with curiosity and interest. When the hall-door had opened and shut,

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Amy had retreated to her sofa again; and as soon as her sister was heard in the back-room, separated by open folding-doors from the front, she began to call her in a shrill querulous voice.

'Pen! How late you are! Who is your friend? You might have brought her in to cheer me up a bit; but you are so selfish: you never think what a dull life mine is, shut up here, while you go gadding about, and never know an ache or a pain. Pennella!'

'Yes, I hear,' was the reply. 'I am coming; is father asleep?'

'I hope so; he was so tiresome before he went to sleep. Miss Fortescue came in, and he asked twenty times who she was.'

'I am glad Miss Fortescue came.'

'Are you? I am sure I don't know why; she is better than nobody, but she is so patronizing, and told me to try to walk a little. The idea! It *is* so unfeeling. Who was that girl you were talking to at the gate? How I should have enjoyed seeing her.'

Pennella wisely kept back the fact that she had wondered at her sister's ability to stand at the window, by which means alone she could have watched her parting talk with Frieda.

'Who was that girl?'

'Miss Burnley, who paints so well. I think I told you of her picture called "Her only Friend."'

'Is that you, Penelope?' The voice came from

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the armchair by the fire. 'Light the gas, will you? I hate sitting in the dark. I can't see to read the paper; light the gas. Where's that girl Judith—an idle piece of goods? Pennella!'

'Yes, dear father; I am just going to light the gas;' and Pennella reached up to the burner and soon lighted it.

'I want my tea. I have been waiting for my tea an hour, I know. I hope you've got some muffins, My tea, I say, do you hear?'

'Judith is getting tea ready, father: see what a bright blaze I am making!' and, kneeling on the rug, little Miss Johnstone looked up with a bright smile into the face which the gas and firelight brought out. The outline of the head was noble, and the features well cut; but there was the painful lack of expression in the eyes, and a drooping of the corners of the mouth, which showed that the mind was feeble and the glory of manhood dimned by failure of brain-power more than by years.

The pale, worn-looking woman on the sofa opposite resembled her father, while the eldest sister, the prop and stay of the family, was almost a repetition of the mother, now long passed away.

Some dim memory of a vanished time seemed to flit before the eyes of the old man, for he looked with a questioning eagerness beyond the sofa, through the open door into the farther room where Judith was bustling about with the cups and saucers.

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The upturned face, bright with the light of love, brought to the old man's mind another face, hidden from his sight long, long ago.

'There's Anne! My dear! What are you doing there, Anne?'

Pennella laid her hand on her father's, and her lips touched it with a gentle kiss.

'Father, it is Pennella, not *Anne*—not mother,' she said.

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CHAPTER VIII.

A WALK TO CHURCH.

CARA WILLOUGHBY did not find her plan of friendship with Frieda flourish as she could wish. The day she called to ask her to take a walk found her out, as we know. It was the day of her visit to Queen's Court. Another attempt was equally unsuccessful: and then Mrs. Willoughby advised that these overtures should cease till some response had been made from the other side.

Cara was disappointed, but said very little about it, and David was disappointed also. The shadow on the blind was still watched, and the interest kept up by speculation as to the substance of that shadow; but near as the two houses were to each other, there seemed a gulf set between them. That

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muddy road was, it would appear, an impassable barrier, and Lady Katherine was really not too anxious to bridge it over. That flight of merry schoolboys passing the house every morning was very well at a distance, but she dreaded the idea of their scampering in at all times and seasons, and was better satisfied that they should keep a respectful distance. Gerard did not seem to be very friendly with them, which was a great point, and Maude would have very little in common with Miss Willoughby. Frieda was not taken into the reckoning at all; she never was.

Autumn days rolled on, dark and dreary. There seemed to be no chance of bright weather: and people began to start from their seats and rush to the windows to hail with admiration and rejoicing the faintest ray of sunshine across the Downs as something uncommon and wonderful!

November does now and then astonish us by a few days of serenely fair and beautiful weather: and even in the year of which I write, a Sunday dawned when all things seemed to rejoice in the loveliness of a day dropped down amidst the gloom and darkness, like a flower at the mouth of a dark cavern.

At the distance of a mile across the Downs, in a valley of surpassing loveliness, a modern church, built to meet the requirements of an increasing number of merchants' families, who settled there from Valehead, raised its spire to the sky.

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Prior Hampstead was a very popular resort; for the land was freehold, and many successful business men bought a few acres there, built a commodious house, and by degrees invested the retired village with importance as their place of abode.

The church of Prior Hampstead was an easy and pleasant walk from Downside Park, and now on this Sunday of which I speak the Willoughbys in goodly array set out early to reach it by eleven o'clock.

Lady Katherine had a headache, and said she must take a quiet morning at home, and Maude and Gerard were only too glad to get permission to walk to Prior Hampstead on this beautiful morning. Generally speaking, Lady Katherine frequented a church within half a mile of Downside Park, and nearer Valehead; but when she was, as to-day, at home with a headache or a cold, or some small ailment, the younger members of the family, if it was fine, were allowed to walk over the Downs to Prior Hampstead. Frieda was ready in good time, and saw the Willoughbys departing with a feeling of sadness that often came over her when a group of happy brothers and sisters seemed to bring out her own lonely life more strongly by way of contrast.

Maude was always a long time dressing, and Thompson and she continually had a contest on Sunday morning about her dress. To-day something had gone wrong about a new dress, which had

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PRIOR HAMPSTEAD.

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been sent to the dressmaker's to be altered, and had not been returned on Saturday evening as promised.

Maude was highly indignant; the failure in the arrival of the dress necessitated the wearing of an old hat. I use the word 'old,' because Maude used it; but the hat would have been *new* in the eyes of Cara Willoughby.

'The fuss you make about your dress, Miss Maude!' Thompson was heard to say, as the altercation grew louder and louder.

'You might change the feather for me,' Maude exclaimed. 'How can I wear a blue feather with this old green dress? If you put in the white feather Mamma said I might have, I could wear the new hat. You are so cross.'

'Well, I'm not going to fuss about feathers on Sunday morning. I shall be late for church, as it is. Look at that young lady over the way, going off with her brothers, and looking every inch a lady too; she is as plain as a Quakeress in *her* dress. I do admire that family! The way they are brought up is a credit. Come, put on your hat, and be off, my dear.

Maude was obliged to submit to her hard fate which was to walk to church in a very pretty and well-made olive-green dress, with a tight-fitting seal-skin jacket—one of Lady Katherine's reduced in size—and the hat to match the dress.

Gerard began to vociferate that he would not wait another moment; and Lady Katherine had left her

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armchair, and, with her eau-de-Cologne bottle in her hand, opened the door of the drawing-room, to ask in a faint voice what *was* the matter.

Instead of reproving Maude for the disturbance she had caused—for in the Downside Park house voices and even words were heard from the basement to the top story—Lady Katherine sympathized.

'We will never employ Miss Barber again—it is really too bad; but you look very nice, darling—never mind.'

And with these words Lady Katherine closed the door, and resigned herself to a quiet morning.

Frieda had walked on in advance. There was something to her contemptible in a girl of fifteen making the dress she wore to go to church a matter of such importance, and she wondered what people like the Willoughbys would say if they could know what was the daily routine at Heathfield.

'They all look so happy and contented, while no one in our house is ever happy. I wonder how it is George does not write; it is a fortnight since I heard from him, and nearly a fortnight since I saw Penelope Johnstone—little Miss Johnstone seems more natural. It is all very well for her to speak of love sweetening and ennobling service; but the only one I want to serve for love's sake does not seem to care for me. Surely he would write to me, if he *really* loved me.'

'Frieda!' it was Maude's voice. 'What do you post on at that rate for? I expect you want to

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overtake the Willoughbys, and they seem equally anxious to avoid us.'

Maude now came up. The clouds had passed from her face, and she had forgotten her dress—and the hat. Gerard joined his cousin, and they walked on together.

The church bells of Prior Hampstead were ringing to call the people to the House of God. Their silvery chime seemed as a voice from a better life, calming the troubled soul with a promise of rest and freedom from care in the eternal Sabbath.

As Frieda drew nearer the church a hand of peace seemed to be laid on her, and she did not heed Maude's entreaties to come up to the top of the church, and not sit down at the lower end amongst the 'footmen and ladies' maids.' Frieda dropped down into the first seat which she saw vacant, a free seat, and rising from her knees saw she was next David Willoughby and two of his brothers.

The service at Prior Hampstead was earnest and impressive. The walk over the Downs from Vale-head was so pleasant that the congregation was always swelled, especially in fine weather, by outsiders. And it was their own fault if any who went to Prior Hampstead came empty away. The sermons preached there were remarkable, and the most unthinking and careless, the most drowsy and indifferent hearers, were almost constrained to listen. The intense earnestness of the rector seemed to

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communicate itself to the people. In his sermons there was a sedate and majestic flow of language, of which every word seemed to have its due weight, and to be used in the right place; and the intellectual as well as the spiritual part was considered by the preacher. Hence it was that those who had ears to hear listened to Mr. Howard's sermons with an interest which grew every Sunday; and to many they were looked forward to as a refreshment to a thirsty soul, as the blessed news from a far country.

David Willoughby was one of these. All the eager aspirations of his opening manhood seemed to have a point set before them which it was worth every effort to reach: and the needs of his daily life, and the battles which had to be fought, were met in an individual and striking way.

'It is almost as if he knew all I thought and all I longed for,' he would say, as he left the church Sunday after Sunday, braced and strengthened.

Frieda listened also, but hers was more the intellectual enjoyment of the sermon—its vivid picture of some character in the Holy Scriptures, which, with a master's hand, was brought out with a few strong touches—a realistic description of some scene where the Lord had lived and suffered—a comprehensive sketch of the days in which we live, with all their floating quicksands and dangers, the progress which insensibly bears us on the stream, an earnest

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entreaty to keep the eyes steadfastly on the great landmarks of our salvation.

The two families from Downside Park walked back together over the Downs. The Willoughbys' large party seemed to surround the Burnleys. Cara fell to Gerard, who had plenty of boyish small-talk at command, and entirely ignored Edgar and Gilbert, who separated themselves from the others, and decided that of all the 'swells' they ever came across, Gerard was the greatest 'cad.' Fraser made Andrew and Bernard happy by walking with them, and David was the object of Maude's marked attentions. She talked on in an even flow of small nothings, but her voice was musical, and her manner had a subtle flattery about it.

'You can't think how amused we were to see you all arrive that wet day. It was such fun to watch the furniture coming first, and then you all came packed into two flys. *You* looked so much older than the rest, we could not make it out. But very, *very* clever people *do* look older than they are. Gerard says you are thought something quite wonderful at the college.'

David laughed; this battery of compliments was a new experience. He had not time to make much rejoinder, for Maude went smoothly on. Her fair hair caught the sun's rays on it, and her complexion was fresh and bright. When she smiled she showed a row of very regular, pretty teeth, and as she smiled

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continually they were a marked feature in her face—perhaps a little too marked.

'Frieda—our cousin, you know—is very clever, and *she* looks older than she is. People guess her at four-and-twenty, and she is not twenty yet. She has a brother who is *very*, extremely handsome, but not exactly, somehow, gentlemanlike. Mother can't endure him. I like him, and we were great friends when he was here last Christmas. Still, I know what mother means; he has lived with common people, and has got their ways rather. Poor old George!'

David listened to Maude with all the attention that was necessary, for chatterers like her prefer monosyllables in return for their long stories, and he had time to speculate as to what Frieda and his mother were talking about.

Mrs. Willoughby had some gift of reading character at first sight; her children said she had never to change her opinion of people, for her first thoughts were always the right thoughts. It is the instinctive appreciation of what is good in others, the sifting the gold from the dross, the touching the chord which will give back melody and not jarring discord, which more than anything else makes a real friend and a friendly acquaintance delightful. This gift has many names—some call it tact, others kindness, some courtesy and politeness of the old fashioned type. Why old fashioned? I think this is a fashion

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which needs cultivation in these days. I see a great want of *des bonnes façons* in the young, and I sometimes think the elders do not set as good an example as they might in this direction. Whatever this quality is called, Mrs. Willoughby possessed it in no common degree. As Frieda walked by her side, she felt the barrier between them growing less and less. Instead of personal matters, Mrs. Willoughby spoke of general subjects, which set Frieda at ease.

As they were nearing the gate of Heathfield, Mrs. Willoughby said:

'I shall be very glad if you will come in and see us sometimes. I think my Cara proposed a walk.'

'Yes,' Frieda said, with the bluntness which many people felt so discouraging. 'Yes; but I did not feel sure she wanted me.'

'I think we all want you,' was the reply. 'We look on you as our artist neighbour, and take a great interest in your painting. I saw "Her only Friend" at Ross's, and admired it even more than when you showed it to me soon after it was finished. I was going to propose you should paint our little Cosy. Her father is not satisfied with her photograph, and we should like to send him a portrait of our sunbeam to cheer him. Will you come in to-morrow to tea at six o'clock, and talk about it?'

'Yes, and thank you very much,' was the reply;

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then, turning quickly, Frieda said, 'I have enjoyed my walk with you, and I hope you will let me walk to church with you again next Sunday.'

And then, while the others were lingering at the gate, Frieda had disappeared.

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CHAPTER IX.

AN UNEXPECTED GUEST.

'MOTHER, I wish you would ask the Willoughbys to dinner or something,' Maude said, when she went into the drawing-room after church. 'Do ask them! they are so nice.'

'My dear child, you are so impetuous. You forget I have a headache, and I do not feel well.'

'You poor, dear Mumsie! I am so sorry; but do ask the Willoughbys—Mrs. Willoughby and Cara, and David. David is delightful.'

'I think we had better wait till the Christmas holidays; then your evenings are free. Now there are the college examinations coming on; but I shall not write any invitations to-day, so there is time to consider it.'

Maude shrugged her shoulders and pouted.

'I never *can* get what I like,' she said. 'Everything goes wrong.'

And then she renewed the old subject of the dressmaker's want of punctuality, and bemoaned her fate.

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Gerard was also pleased with his walk from church, and said Cara was a very nice girl with no nonsense about her; 'isn't she, Frieda?' he asked, appealing to his cousin at dinner.

'Yes, I think they are all a very happy, nice family.'

'What did Mrs. Willoughby talk about? You walked with her.'

'I can't remember everything she said, but she is very kind and agreeable. She asked me to go in to tea to-morrow.'

'Afternoon tea?'

'No; Mrs. Willoughby said six o'clock.'

'Oh! a high tea, I suppose; the most uncomfortable meal imaginable,' Lady Katherine exclaimed; 'but it suits people with small means and large families.'

'I suppose I can go, Aunt Katherine?' Frieda said.

'It really is a mere form asking my permission now, Frieda,' was the reply; 'you have become so very independent of late.'

Frieda's face clouded over at once.

'Mrs. Willoughby wants to speak to me about a picture; I did not think you would have any objection.'

'I am not aware that I said I *had* any objection,' was Lady Katherine's reply. 'You will remember, my dear, that you are engaged to dine with me on

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Tuesday at Lady Holt's. She knew your poor father, and is anxious to see you.'

'I wish I were "out,"' said Maude; 'but in another year I shall be free, and then I will have plenty of fun.'

'Two years at least,' said Lady Katherine, who was not at all anxious to have a grown-up young lady for a daughter.

'Mumsie likes to be first wherever she goes, and when I am with her perhaps she won't *always* be first, dear, sweet little Mumsie.' This was said with a succession of kisses as they were leaving the dining-room: and Lady Katherine, instead of reproving Maude for her want of respect, called her a 'saucy pussie,' and then returned to her easy-chair by the fire in the drawing-room.

'Are you coming to church again, Maude?' Frieda asked.

'No—I think not; the day is clouded over, and I think I will stay at home.'

'Oh! once is enough for church at this time of the year; I want a walk on a Sunday,' said Gerard, who was carefully smoothing his hat and arranging his handkerchief in his coat-pocket, with one little corner of the coloured border peeping out. 'I suppose it would be no use asking that prig Willoughby to go for a walk; but I think I'll try.'

'Are you not going to service in the College Chapel, Gerard?'

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'Oh! I don't know; no fellows are regular. I mean none of the day fellows.'

'There go David Willoughby and his brother,' said Maude, starting up. 'How can you call him a prig, Gerard?'

'I am sorry if I have offended you,' was the reply, as Gerard left the room.

Frieda was just coming downstairs ready for church, when the door-bell rang, and the knocker gave two distinct thuds.

'Almost like a postman's knock,' she thought, as Susan came to answer the summons.

To her surprise she heard a voice say—

'Is Miss Frieda Burnley at home?' and then Susan's—

'Yes, sir; will you walk in?'

Frieda was already half-way downstairs, and the person who was now entering the small square lobby looked up and saw her.

'Miss Frieda,' Susan said, addressing her, while a suspicious creaking of the drawing-room door indicated pretty plainly that Maude was listening there.

'I want to see Miss Frieda Burnley, on business and alone, if you please,' as Susan was hesitating.

Frieda now came down to a level with a middle-aged man rather below the average height, whose face was honest and kindly, though not, as Lady Katherine would have said, 'refined.'

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'I am Frieda Burnley,' she said; 'will you come in here?' turning into the dining-room where the *débris* of the Sunday luncheon still lay on the table.

'I suppose I ought to have sent in my card; but I had only a business one with me, with the name of my firm in the corner—so I thought that might not be agreeable to my lady here. I am your uncle, John Hunter, my dear; don't you remember me? And I am come on unpleasant business.'

'About George!' Frieda exclaimed. 'Is he ill? Oh! is he ill?'

'Not that I know of,' said Mr. Hunter, wiping his face with a very large white pocket-handkerchief with a wide border of black spots, beginning the size of moons and dwindling off into spots no bigger in circumference than peas.

Frieda felt fascinated by that border, and could almost have counted those graduated spots.

Mr. Hunter did not hurry himself, and the handkerchief travelled over his face several times, accompanied with a sort of half-ejaculation, half-sigh, which it is rather difficult to represent by a word.

'Not that I know of; but he has left our house—as good a home as ever boy had.'

'And where is he?' exclaimed Frieda, clasping her hands tightly together. 'Where is he?'

'That's just it, my dear,' said Mr. Hunter, examining the corner of the ceiling opposite him and above

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Frieda. 'We don't know; we thought you might know.'

'No. I have not heard a word since a letter he wrote to me, at the same time you wrote to my aunt. That must be quite a fortnight ago. I hoped all things had smoothed down, and that, as he did not answer my letter, he was settling down with you.'

'Here are the letters—the last two you wrote. I have brought them with me that you might be made aware of the real state of the case. To tell you the truth, till I saw those letters I thought my young gentleman had come here. Why, you *are* grown, and quite the young lady, eh?' said Mr. Hunter, looking down from the corner of the ceiling full at Frieda. 'I remember you at your poor papa's funeral, when I took off George and promised to be a father to him for your mother's sake. I have done my best, and it is only of late that he has got unsettled with a lot of foolish notions about trade and such like. I should not have come here if my wife had not begged me to come. We are so extra full of work at this time of the year, and my working partner, Mr. Brett, is laid up; so I could only spare a Sunday. I started last evening when the office was shut, and I have come up here just to tell you the state of the case. My wife has no chick nor child of her own, and so she has loved that boy a deal too much, and takes it to heart more than I do.

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The young fellow will soon get sick of having no home, and he will drop back to the old moorings, depend on it.

'But are you not making any effort to find him?' Frieda said.

Mr. Hunter laughed a short laugh, and the pocket-handkerchief with the moons came out again.

'Well, coming here is an effort, isn't it?'

'But I know nothing of George—nothing! I am sure you had better advertise. I can pay for it,' Frieda added nervously.

'My dear, a few pounds isn't of much odds to me one way or other. It's not the money; but I must tell you that it was a stab like a knife when I opened the cash-box in the escritoire, and found a note from the boy. I've got it here!'

And Mr. Hunter, having spread the handkerchief over one knee, produced a huge pocket-book with a clasp, and took out a piece of paper, handing it to Frieda. Every vestige of colour had left her face, and so strong was her emotion that Mr. Hunter was almost frightened.

'Lost — dead — gone — ill—miserable! Oh, anything but this!' she faltered. 'Do not tell me he is a *thief!*'

'Come, come, my dear! "thief" is a sharp word. If the boy had come to me, and honest and straightforward had said, "Give me a hundred pounds, and let me go"—well, I might have done it. But when he

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took to scorning our ways, and treating us to tall talk of lords and ladies and fashionable folks; and when he took to picking quarrels with the lads at the school because they wouldn't stand his cheek, why then I cut up rusty, I don't deny, and I wrote off to her ladyship here, and the young fellow wrote to you, and then—well, he made off, and that's what he left behind him.'

Poor Frieda, her Dagon lay upon its face; very common was the clay of her idol, and very deep was the humiliation she felt! On the scrap of paper was written:

'I have taken five ten-pound notes out of your box; you have some money of mine, or will have when I come of age; if I don't pay you before, pay yourself then. I am going to try my fortune amongst those of my own rank and station.

'G. ST. ANDREW BURNLEY.'

'Oh, it is too dreadful!' Frieda exclaimed. 'My only comfort is that I can repay you now. I have the money; I have been saving up to try—to try—and help George.'

'Ah! I thought you had a finger in the pie. Well, never mind, my dear; don't look so sorrowful and scared.'

'I can't bear to think George has returned your kindness in this way,' Frieda said. 'Oh, you cannot know what pain it gives me!'

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'Well, well! let it pass. The trumpery fifty pounds is nothing to me. I have no children of my own, and an excellent business, and good income. So never trouble yourself about the money. I said to my poor wife, I would willingly have lost fifty times as much money to know that boy was affectionate and grateful to *her*. Why, when he had the scarlet fever three years ago, she nursed him night and day. She has been his best friend, and never thought anything a trouble. So this conduct of the young fellow cuts rather deep, you see.'

'I know it must,' Frieda exclaimed. 'Oh, I know it must! If I could only find out where the poor boy is. It will not help him to any better position, going off like that from his home; and besides, there is the disgrace, the dishonour!'

'We'll try to forget that,' Mr. Hunter said. 'We'll let bygones be bygones. I have consulted Mr. Bigsby—that's the master of the school where we put George—and he says: "Leave him to his own ways; he will come back when he wants money;" and I believe that is the best plan. You forget you are my niece, my dear, as much as George is my nephew. Well, I should be proud to own you anywhere: and as to my wife, she would like to see you and make friends.'

Frieda did not pay much attention to these remarks; her thoughts were far away, with George. Where was he, and how should she be able to find

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him out? Poor Frieda was now overwhelmed with that sense of helplessness to act which is a great trial to energetic, self-reliant natures. While there is anything to *do*, there is hope that what is done may be successful. It may be a slender hope, but its very presence is a relief. It is despair which paralyzes us, and freezes the very springs of all feeling and emotion. But hope, even if based on a delusion, still tells of life, and the possibility of relief.

Mr. Hunter could not enter into all that was passing in the girl's mind as she sat before him with hands tightly clasped together over the little prayer-book, which she had brought downstairs with her, when she heard his voice in the hall. There was an expression in the young face which eyes like Mr. Hunter's could not read; and after waiting for two or three minutes for her to speak, he drew himself out of his chair and prepared to go. Seeing his movement, she seemed to wake out of her dream.

'Will you have any refreshment? I am so sorry I cannot ask you to stay, but I would rather no one here knew about George. Will you please not tell anyone about the money?'

'No, my dear. I have no wish to set the town-crier off with this story; but this Lady Katherine will have to know, I suppose, won't she? She will wonder what brought me here, and you will be obliged to tell her. I do not object to a glass of

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sherry, for it is a long walk from the Queen's Hotel down in Valehead up here. Shall I help myself? Mr. Hunter said, putting his hand on the decanter.

'Oh yes, please do; and won't you have a biscuit?' she added, handing Mr. Hunter the biscuit-box.

He munched two or three biscuits with a crunching noise which would have tried Lady Katherine's nerves, and then, pouring out a glass of water, he was preparing to go, when Maude came in, unable to restrain her curiosity another minute.

'Mother says, Frieda, she would like to see your friend, and will he come into the drawing-room?'

Maude said this with a half-offended, half-reproachful air; and she was so much occupied in studying Mr. Hunter's appearance, that Frieda's imploring glance at her uncle was lost on her.

'I had better see her ladyship, perhaps; but,' in an undertone to Frieda, 'mum is the word, for your sake.'

Then Mr. Hunter walked across the narrow lobby to the drawing-room, straight up to the easy-chair where Lady Katherine was so prone to take her ease; and on her half rising from her sitting position, he said:

'We have met before, my lady. I am John Hunter.'

'Pray sit down, Mr. Hunter. I am not very well today. It would have been better taste if Miss Frieda Burnley had told me of your visit. The dining-room was hardly the room in which I should wish my visi-

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tors to be received. I was obliged at last to send my dear child to say I should be glad to see you. I thought probably it was one of the artists who sometimes call on my niece about her pictures.'

'Well, you see, my lady, I am come, as was my duty, to tell the boy's nearest relations that George Burnley has left our house.'

'Left your house? And pray, where is he?'

'That, my lady, I can't tell you. I thought at first he might have come here, till I saw two letters from his sister addressed to him at my house: then I knew she was as ignorant as we are—my poor wife and I—of the boy's whereabouts.'

'He could not possibly be received here, Mr. Hunter; I hope you fully understand that. His sister lives with me, at the earnest request of her dear uncle—my late dear husband—who was all generosity and goodness, but highly unpractical. You undertook the boy, and of course I am in no way concerned about him.'

'Well, well! that's true enough. I did not expect you to do anything; but my wife and I said you ought to know, and his sister also, that George has left us. It is a cruel cut to us both—especially to my wife.'

'Really,' said Lady Katherine, much relieved that nothing was expected of her—'Really, Mr. Hunter! I should have thought you were only too glad to be free from the charge of a boy like George Burnley.

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He is evidently quite unworthy, and the best thing you can do is to forget him.'

'Ah! but your ladyship, that is easier said than done. We miss him everywhere; his whistle when he came in from school, his step on the stairs, his voice calling our old dog, Jip. No, no! my wife and I are not of the sort to take up and cast down all of a heap. Now I know for certain the lad is not here, I shall advertise in the papers—our local paper and the Valehead one.'

'Oh no! pray do not think of it,' Lady Katherine said: 'it would be very unpleasant for us. I really would not go to the expense. Very likely when the poor infatuated boy is in distress he will return.'

'I will obey you, madam!—my lady, I should say—as to the Valehead papers, but I shall advertise as widely as I can in other places. And now I will wish you good-day. I have a long walk before me, back into Valehead, and I must get to church this evening; for it is not my custom to do business on Sunday, but it was the only day I could spare. We have double our usual business at this time of year, with Christmas coming on. Now good-bye, my dear,' he said, rising and advancing to Frieda, who stood leaning against the piano, and with a face so white and woe-struck that even Maude's superficial nature was touched to give an expression of sympathy. She had drawn near her cousin and put her hand in hers, saying, with the caressing

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manner she could use sometimes, even to Miss Masterman:

'I dare say he will come back, Frieda, darling; don't look so fearfully sad.'

Mr. Hunter's loud kiss on her forehead seemed to startle her into the reality of her position.

'Yes, yes, the young lady is right. George will come back. Cheer up, Frieda—cheer up! That's what I say to my wife. And we two loved him like a son.'

'Thank you, thank you, for all you have done,' poor Frieda faltered. And then, as the door closed on Mr. Hunter, she went up to her room slowly and sadly, more like one in a dream than actually suffering, and sat down by the window in the gathering twilight, cold, sad, and miserable.

'I do wonder Frieda should care so much for her brother,' Maude said, when Gerard, having returned from his stroll, was told the story of Mr. Hunter's visit and its object.

'I dare say you do wonder,' Gerard said; 'I don't believe you would care if I disappeared to-morrow.'

'Oh, Gerard! I should care dreadfully, for in the first place it would break Mumsie's heart, and there would never be any happiness again; but Frieda is quite different. She does not live with George, and never has lived with him, since he was quite a small child. Then, handsome as he is, Mumsie is right.

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There is nothing in him to make such a tremendous fuss about. I thought she was going to faint while Mr. Hunter was talking to Mumsie. I did indeed!'

'Poor thing!' said Gerard. 'I wonder she has not taken herself off, long ago. We treat her shamefully, and that's the truth.'

'My dear Gerard,' said Lady Katherine, 'do be more careful in what you say. Frieda is treated with *every* consideration in my house; and you have no right to make such unfounded assertions.'

'I don't think they are unfounded,' said Gerard bluntly, in a tone with which David Willoughby would never have addressed his mother—no, nor to any woman, gentle or simple. 'You are not kind to Frieda, and Maude plagues her on every possible occasion, and I am not much better. Still, I do see what a life the poor girl has. Other people see it too!'

'What do you mean?' said Lady Katherine, who had a wholesome fear of what 'other people said,' and liked to stand well with that very ambiguous and comprehensive term, 'the world.' 'It is extremely wrong of you, Gerard,' she continued, 'to speak thus. I feel it acutely. I am sure no mother could more earnestly desire her children's welfare than I do.'

'I am talking of Frieda,' said Gerard, 'not of Maude, or myself, for that matter. Nothing will make me say she has fair play here; and I notice, if

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you don't, that the Willoughbys like her and admire her; and as we don't pay them any civility, they are turning the tables on us, and inviting her to dinner.'

'Tea! high tea!' Maude exclaimed.

'Well, what is the difference? The Willoughbys are very nice people—at least, the eldest daughter is—and I can tell you the Head-master thinks no end of David; and he is sharp enough, for he has floated up ever so high in the Sixth.'

'I wish you would even float into the Fifth Form,' said Maude. 'I don't like to tell people when they ask, that you, who have been so long at the college, are only in the Upper Fourth Form.'

'Oh, nonsense!' said Gerard, planting his back well against the chimney-piece. 'I don't pretend to care for all the old rubbishy Greek and Latin authors —musty old fellows—who are not worth the trouble of reading. I am for progress and casting off old shackles, and moving on with the age. There is no use resisting the stream; it carries us all with it, and so much the better!'

'You absurd boy!' was all the rejoinder his mother made; and this rather too frequent type of young England whistled low, and strolled out of the room.

I may be wrong, but I think this type of English schoolboy is greatly on the increase. There is too little reverence taught now, either by example or precept. A boy of sixteen thinks himself wise, and

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generally increases in his own esteem till he reaches twenty. Probably by that time, either at the university or in a public office, he begins to doubt himself a little, and to be not *quite* so sure of his own superiority. There are others who do their best to knock it out of him, perhaps: or better, far better, he comes under a good influence, and the scales fall from his eyes. We are prone to talk too much of the outside of things, and to insist on a certain code of gentleman-like manners beyond the walls of home; but are we fathers and mothers careful as we should be about the good manners, *des bonnes façons*, of the family circle? Do we go to the very root of the matter, and see here, as in other things, that the *heart* is right? For 'manners are not idle, but the fruit of noble nature and a noble mind.' And where do we, or rather where ought we, to look for the great pattern here as everywhere —even to Him Who pleased not Himself; for verily and indeed, unselfishness is, after all, at the spring of all courtesy and good manners to our nearest and dearest ones, as to our neighbours and friends.

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CHAPTER X.

THE GLIMMER OF LIGHT.

SUNDAY was always the happiest day in the week to Mrs. Willoughby's octave. I am far from wishing to represent any family as perfectly free from the clouds which arise so unexpectedly and darken the sky — clouds of ill-temper, clouds of selfishness, clouds born of mistrust and doubt. Mrs. Willoughby's children were not perfect, as indeed we have already seen; but whatever the jarring discords or the 'false notes' in the week, Sunday was generally harmonious and happy.

The great festival of the week ought to be regarded as such: a day of gladness and a day of rest; a day of thanksgiving and the voice of melody. Those who try to wipe out Sunday from the calendar are like men who take the keystone from an arch, or the corner-stone from a fair building. The ruin of our country will be assured if we consent to give up our Day of Rest: a day, not of gloom, but of brightness; a day of family union and cessation from the wear and tear of this work-a-day world.

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Mrs. Willoughby was sitting at the top of the long table that Sunday evening. Cara made tea, and there was a line of young faces on either side.

'I wonder what father is doing now?' Fraser said; 'would it not be jolly if we had a telephone to Allahabad?'

'Who wrote to father by the last mail?' Cara asked. 'I do not believe either Gilbert or Edgar have written for a month.'

'I have no time,' Gilbert said; 'and if I had, what is there to say? father does not care about football.'

'He cares to hear of your place, and how you are getting on with algebra,' Fraser said. 'I wrote a sheet last week, and I shall never miss a fortnight the whole time he is away.'

'I am thinking of a delightful surprise for your father,' Mrs. Willoughby said. 'When Mr. Watson returns to India I mean to send him Cosy's portrait, painted by——'

'Our unknown artist! over the way! That is a bright idea, mother. Then we shall know her at last, for we shall have the sitting here, of course,' exclaimed Gilbert.

'Cosy will like to have her picture taken for father, won't she?'

Cosy was at the moment intently occupied with trying to force some crumbs of her Sunday cake down the throat of a little white kitten, which had

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been given to nurse, as an antidote for an army of mice which haunted the lower regions, and committed nightly depredations in the larder. She looked up at last and said:

'If kitty is took too, I'd like to have my picture. I'll squeeze her ever so tight, 'cause she won't sit still, perhaps.'

The kitten now gave very decided indications that she would not sit still, and succeeded, after a scratch was inflicted on Cosy's fat arm, in getting down from her position.

'That does not look very promising for the picture, my Cosy,' said her mother, 'but we will consult the artist.'

'I think it will be an excellent plan,' David said. 'No one can look at Miss Burnley without seeing she is not happy. I believe she will like to come in here. They all snub her fearfully, and that pretty little dressed-up doll, who walked from Prior Hampstead with us this morning, is the worst of all.'

'I like none of the lot,' said Edgar; 'they all give themselves airs.'

When tea was over the whole family gathered in the drawing-room, and had what they called their service of song. Hymns in which Cosy's little voice could join, followed each other in quick succession. Then all the younger boys repeated a passage, chosen by themselves, from the Bible, and Cosy, standing on a

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stool by her mother's side, said in her sweet, childish treble, the Psalm of childhood, which so many rosy lips have lisped at their mother's knee, 'The Lord is my Shepherd; I shall not want.'

The servants were all gone to church, which was Mrs. Willoughby's invariable custom, and Cara and she divided the household duties between them on Sunday evenings. Mrs. Willoughby, like many other mothers, delighted in these Sunday evenings, when she saw her three youngest children safely in bed, and had undisputed sway in the nursery. Those happy, baby days were passing from her now, for Cosy was four years old, and there was no successor to her, as in former years.

'Let me make the most of my children while I have them,' Mrs. Willoughby would say, when Cara offered to take her mother's place.

The little children vanish from our sight almost before we can feel how sweet they are, and we long for them in vain. Happy is the mother who, untrammeled by fashion or society, can really enjoy her children as they spring up around her. I have heard it said, by an eye-witness, that no picture could be more beautiful than that which a daughter of our own Royal house presented, surrounded by her children—a mother in deed, not only in name. As we know, the lamented Princess Alice of Hesse lost her own life in her personal devotion to her children in their illness. But oh! how sweet is the

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memory she has left behind her, and how beautiful the example for all mothers to follow!

Of all sad sights there is scarcely one that is sadder than the careless and indifferent mother, vain of her own beauty or literary attainments or possessions of jewels and costly ornaments, and neglecting the priceless jewels committed to her care, and of which she must give an account in the day when the Lord requires them at her hand.

The voices of the children were heard over the way, where, in her own room, Frieda was desolate and sad.

'How happy they all are!' she said at last, as she went to the window and opened it.

It was a mild night, more like July than November. A pale moon, high in the heavens, was hiding its face continually behind light swiftly-floating clouds, and as often peeping out again and throwing sudden tracts of fitful radiance across the Downs and the roofs of the houses in Downside Park.

Presently the voices ceased, lights appeared in the upper windows, and the figures of the children flitted across the blind.

Poor Frieda felt her own solitude more oppressive by way of contrast.

'If I had only some one to tell, who would care, who would advise me for the best, who would be sorry for me! I cannot tell Aunt Katherine, she would only be shocked and scornful; and Maude or

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Gerard, what would they care? If there was only something to *do;* but what can I do? If I knew where he was, it would be a comfort. Oh! I promised mother I would always look after George; and my father said he knew, as the years went on, I should be a good elder sister, and although I could not live with him I could influence him: and I *have* tried to do this. I have been ready to give up everything for him; and now it is all over. I have failed! I have failed! and the money is lying here which would have helped him; and instead of coming to me, he has gone off with a stain upon his name that he will never, never lose. Whatever happens, I will keep this secret; *no one* shall know that, for their sake who are gone from us—our father and mother. Oh! if they had lived, how different it would have been! It is no use struggling to make it better; he is gone, and he is disgraced, and I am miserable. I dare say all the Willoughbys are good boys; with a mother like theirs how can they help it? It *is* hard that some families should have every advantage and others none. I cannot understand it.'

Then there came into Frieda's mind the memory of little Miss Johnstone's words as she disappeared in the narrow dark passage of the little dull house with a light shining in her face.

'Love sweetens and ennobles all service,' little Miss Johnstone had said.

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That could not be true in her case, for had she not served, or tried to serve, her brother for love's sake? But had not Penelope added, 'For His sake Who loves best'?

And here Frieda felt brought to a dead wall, as it were, over which she could not pass. She had loved her brother: she *did* love him, with a love of which girls like Maude know nothing. She would have done anything to raise him to a better position—she longed to see him there, and would have been proud to feel *her* hand had done it. But this love had no connection with the higher and best love of which little Miss Johnstone had spoken, with the light in her eyes. What had Frieda to do with this love. Ah! herein lay the difference. Wise love for our dearest ones will bear all things and hope all things, it is true; but it will set up a higher standard for them than any earthly one, and will point to the old, old maxim, of 'doing our duty in that station of life to which it has pleased God to call us,' as the safe path for all honourable exertion. Some glimmering of the mistake she had made came into Frieda's mind that night, and, poor child! bitterly was she yet to suffer for it. She did not cry—no tears came. She sat in mute despair, her head upon her hands. At last a sharp rap at the door roused her, and Maude said:

'Frieda, do come down! mother is so angry!'

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CHAPTER XI.

THE MUSIC OF 'THE OCTAVE.'

FRIEDA carried her weight of care with her into St. Winifred's the next evening; and as she took her place at the long table, with its double line of happy faces round it, her heart sank within her. We all know — perhaps not many, I hope, who are as young as Frieda — how bitterly a secret burden presses—a burden which we cannot lighten by asking for sympathy from those around us. Had George been ill, or had he met with some accident, or had he been unkindly treated by the Hunters, she could have claimed sympathy from that sweet, bright mother who presided over the long table, and kept all things in tune by her presence there. But how could Frieda tell Mrs. Willoughby what

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sore trouble she was in? That George was gone was bad enough, but that he should have failed to tell her *where* he was gone was infinitely worse; and, worst of all, he had left the roof which had sheltered him from childhood with a cloud hanging over him. Some harder and more money-loving men than Mr. Hunter was might have threatened George with prosecution, for the act was a dishonest one. This was the sting to poor Frieda's wound, and it was, as I said, one that she did not feel she could confide to any human ear.

The 'high tea' of which Maude had spoken so contemptuously was a very pleasant meal. Except that tea and coffee took the place of wine—none of the Willoughbys ever taking anything stronger than coffee—it was very much like a plain but well-appointed dinner. Cara had, perhaps, decorated the table with chrysanthemums and red ivy-leaves a little more profusely than usual, remembering that an artist was to see their effect. She was a little disappointed that those wistful eyes did not show the appreciation she expected. Everyone talked freely, David and Fraser especially, and Gilbert and Edgar were both in a good mood.

'They sound the most frequent discords,' their mother would sometimes say, 'and so I have to take the greater care not to put them out of tune.'

The affair of the little orange-girl had faded out of remembrance, and it was one of Mrs. Willoughby's

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canon laws that disagreeable subjects should be avoided. Bygones were by one consent bygones, amongst these brothers and sisters. To-night there was an animated discussion about the college concert. Gilbert and Edgar had both unusually good voices, and Fraser had an excellent knowledge of music. He had been delicate in earlier childhood, and had learned the violin, the practice of which, even in the midst of school-work, he endeavoured to keep up.

'The music-master at the college, Dr. Smith, says that Fraser ought to go in for music, and that he hopes you will let him have violin-lessons next term, mother,' Edgar said.

Fraser's face flushed with pleasure, but he only exclaimed:

'Oh, I shall have to stick to my other work, I expect; it is hard enough for me to keep up at all. Of course I should like it, and Dr. Smith is so jolly.'

'Have you played to him, Fraser?' Cara asked.

'Yes; after the choral class. He asked me to stay behind with two other fellows who have fiddles, and asked us to play.'

'What did you play? not that dreary old "Ah, che la morte," I hope, which is so like the tune the old cow died of. All the grinding organs in Farnham used to squeak it out, till I positively hate it,' said Gilbert.

'I didn't play it,' Fraser said shortly.

'No; he played that "hopping waltz" of Chopin's,'

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said little Andrew. 'That one he plays to me and Bernard and Cosy when we dance.'

'I hope Dr. Smith did not dance the "hopping waltz" then,' exclaimed David; 'he is much too fat.'

This good-natured speech of David's prevented Edgar's 'Stupid little chap!' being heard.

'Well, Fraser, you shall play your waltz after tea to Miss Burnley, and Cosy and Andrew and Bernard shall show us how they can dance.'

The two little boys took it in turn to come down to tea; one always remained with Cosy and nurse, who kept a jealous guard over the last baby, and never let her out of her sight at tea and breakfast, except on Sundays.

'Cosy is so pleased to think she is to have her picture taken; she has been posing with that unhappy white kitten ever so many times. Are you going to paint her portrait, Miss Burnley?' Fraser asked.

'I will try, if Mrs. Willoughby wishes; but I do not know whether I shall succeed.'

'That is a portrait, is it not?' Cara asked, 'the little girl in "Her only Friend."'

'It was the portrait of our life-model. Of course the child had been taught how to sit, which makes a great difference. It is little Nelly, an orange-girl, who lives in Queen's Court, in a very poor neighbourhood, where Miss Johnstone does so much work for the poor.'

'Who is Miss Johnstone?' Mrs. Willoughby asked,

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for she saw that the mention of the little orange-girl brought back a cloud on Edgar's face.

'She is a friend of mine whom I met at the Art School. Everyone calls her "little Miss Johnstone;" she is very small and very unpretending. No one would ever imagine she could get through such an amount of work. She gets her living as an artist, and almost entirely supports her father, who has been paralyzed, and her sister, who is an invalid full of fancies and nerves. You would be sure to like little Miss Johnstone,' Frieda said, her eyes glowing with the pleasure she felt in praising her friend.

'Why should I be sure to like little Miss Johnstone?' Mrs. Willoughby asked, with a smile.

'Because you and she are alike. I mean——' Frieda paused and hesitated. 'I mean you have the same sort of ideas, I fancy. If I fail in the picture of your little girl, Miss Johnstone would be glad to have the commission.'

And then poor Frieda's voice sank, and the light faded from her eyes as the word 'commission' reminded her that the joy and pride she had felt in selling her pictures were over now. How could she help George now that she knew nothing about him?

'Well, come into the drawing-room now; we shall find your live model there. Are you coming, boys, or have you too much work on hand?'

David, who was preceding them with a lamp, said:

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'We can all come for an hour, I think, and let us have Fraser's fiddle. It is fun to see Cosy dancing.'

The two little ones were anxiously awaiting the arrival from the dining-room, and Cosy, springing to David, said:

'I thought you *was never* coming.'

'Here's the live model,' David said, putting down the lamp and taking Cosy in his arms.

'She shall paint you too, David—Cosy and David and the kitty. Look at the scratches. Kitty is so cross 'cause I hug her.'

'Dear little thing! you have been in the wars,' Frieda said, going up to the child, and touching her little fat arm gently. 'Poor little thing! you should teach kitty better manners.'

'Come,' Cara said, 'it is getting late. What shall be done before you three little ones depart to bed? Shall we sing, or dance, or what?'

'I don't want to dance to-night,' said Cosy fretfully, as she saw Fraser getting out his violin.

'Oh yes, you do, Cosy,' Andrew said. 'You must dance the "hopping waltz."'

'Get away; I shan't!' was Cosy's reply, for she was a little put out that Andrew had had the honour of sitting up to late tea, and she and Bernard were left to the nursery.'

'Oh, nonsense!' exclaimed David; 'you shall dance with me, and then we will sing the cradle song or the "Pretty Boat." Now, Fraser, strike up!'

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Cosy yielded to the genial influence of her brother, and very soon they were 'hopping the dance' to Fraser's violin, and Frieda had time to admire the child as a study.

Cosy had not only the childlike attraction of 'roses and lilies' in her complexion, and flowing golden hair, but she had the most fairy-like figure, and the grace of movement which comes to some children naturally, and is denied to others. No wonder her mother's eyes dwelt fondly upon her 'baby,' as her tiny feet kept time to Fraser's waltz, and David whirled her round and round. No wonder Frieda said almost involuntarily:

'That is a beautiful picture. I should like to paint her in one of those graceful attitudes.'

'Yes,' Cara said; 'she is wonderfully pretty, but David spoils her more than is good for her. He is her slave, and our father was not much better! You see, for so many years they only had me. I was, and I am, of a very prosaic species; therefore, when after six boys this fairy dropped down upon us, or rather, as father would always say, when the last note of the Octave struck out the final melody, everybody, including the first note, felt inclined to make much of it.'

'What is her real name?' Frieda asked.

'Cassandra Millicent. It is a big name for such a mite; but it was my grandmother's, and let us hope she will grow up to it. Father calls her

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Cosy, and David likes it, while mother clings to Baby.'

'Now we'll sing altogether,' said the little autocrat. '*All* come and sing, and mother play.'

'You have forgotten the little word, Baby mine,' said Mrs. Willoughby.

'*Please* all sing "First the little, little boat," and then—and then "Hush-a-bye, baby," and then——'

'These first,' said David. 'By the time we have got through these, some one I know will be asleep.'

Mrs. Willoughby sang as she played, and led the children's voices. They could all sing, for all had an ear for music, though the voices differed in quality. David's had lately taken a certain gruffness, and Cara's was a rich contralto, but the five other boys had sweet ringing trebles, and little Andrew's was the sweetest of all. Cory stood well out in the front of the half circle, which was turned towards Frieda and away from the piano; David behind her, with his hand on her golden hair, beating time gently with his finger, and Cara next him, and the five brothers on either side.

There is always something particularly touching in the sound of children's united voices, and families who have the gift of song amongst them would do well to cultivate it. For many a day the chorus of the little simple song rang in Frieda's ears, and with it came back the memory of that group of brothers and sisters, as she saw it that evening, when she sat

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apart listening, the great trouble at her heart for the time lulled to rest.

Cosy's favourite song of the 'Morning Sail' ran thus, and clearly and distinctly did Cosy's little voice sing the words:

'I got into a boat—a pretty, pretty boat,
Just as the day was dawning;
And I took a little oar, and pushed off from the shore,
So very, very early in the morning.

'And every little wave had its night-cap on,
Its night-cap, white cap, night-cap on;
And every little wave had its night-cap on,
So very, very early in the morning.'

These four lines of chorus delighted the children's hearts, and were repeated after the other verses.

'In their caves so still and deep
All the fishes were asleep,
When a ripple gave them warning.
Said the minnow to the skate,
"Don't lie in bed so late,"
Said he, "'Tis very early in the morning."

'Said the sturgeon to the eel,
"Just imagine how I feel.
Excuse me, my dear, for yawning.
People *ought* to let us know
When a-sailing they would go
So very, very early in the morning."'

Then followed the new version of 'Hush-a-bye, Baby,' and then, as David had predicted, the real Baby was very sleepy, and ready for her own hush-a-

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bye. The songs always ended with a hymn — a childish hymn, in which the little ones could join, and this evening it was one familiar to all.

'On the dark hill's western side, the last purple gleam has died;
Twilight to one sombre hue changes all, both green and blue.'

Then it was 'Good-night' from the little ones, for whom nurse had patiently waited by the door for ten minutes, and then the boys dispersed to their evening work. Cara felt somewhat disinclined to accompany them, but her help had been promised to Fraser, who was the slowest of the schoolboys; and when her mother said, 'Must you go this evening?' she said:

'Yes; I have to help Fraser a little with his arithmetic.'

'Do not be long, dear,' Mrs. Willoughby said as she left the room.

'How happy you all seem!' Frieda said, with a sigh. 'Life with you is different from life with us.'

'I dare say you feel the want of near home ties,' Mrs. Willoughby said; 'but you have great resources in yourself.'

'I? I do not think I have.'

'Not with your gift of painting? I am sure many of us might well envy you such a power.'

'You need envy no one,' Frieda said, watching Mrs. Willoughby's fingers as they plied, with a swift

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unerring aim, the bright needles which were to produce David's socks. 'Home life like yours must be delightful, with no sham and no pretence, but with reality in everything.'

'We have our troubles, my dear; you see us at our best to-night, but there are passing discords sometimes, and for *me* there must be for two or three long years deep anxiety. The children are dear, and for their sake and their father's I remain with them, but *his* loss is irreparable to me. Many wives who have husbands in India told me I should soon get used to separation. I can *never* get used to it, if that common expression means that I shall learn not to mind it. I want my husband every hour of every day.'

'But you know he is earning distinction; you know he is well and happy—and—' she hesitated—'and *good*, and useful.'

'Yes, indeed I do, and that is my great comfort.'

Frieda's face was turned towards Mrs. Willoughby as she sat by her side on the sofa, and she said:

'You cannot know what it is to love what is—unworthy—seems unworthy. Don't tell the others, please, but my brother has left the Hunters, with whom he has lived ever since we were orphans, and no one, no one knows where he is.'

'My poor child, is this the trouble which makes you look so sad?'

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'Yes,' Frieda said, burying her face against Mrs. Willoughby's shoulder. 'Yes.'

Then the tender maternal arm stole round Frieda's waist, and she was drawn close to the kind heart, which beat with sympathy.

'I don't like — I can't tell everyone; no one in our house really cares for George, but *I* care for him, and I thought he loved me; now I could almost doubt it. He must know what pain he gives me, and it is selfish of him.'

'Yes; I think it is. And there can be no doubt that it is a great mistake for him to leave his uncle, who has been so kind to him.'

'Yes, he has been kind in his way; but you know,' and the hot colour rushed to Frieda's face, 'you know Mr. Hunter is not a gentleman. He was my mother's half-brother. My grandmother was poor and friendless, and when my grandfather offered her a comfortable home, she took refuge there. But my mother and a brother of hers who died were as different as possible from these elder children of my grandfather's first family. My mother was so refined and lovely: her name was Alicia Rose, and my father always called her his Rose without thorns. My father met her first in a family where she was a governess. My aunt, Lady Katherine, has such ridiculous notions that she looks down on governesses, and really she speaks to Miss Masterman as if she belonged to another order of being. If only I had

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been properly educated, I would have gladly gone out as a governess; but everything has been against me. I have had no routine education; I could not pass an examination in anything. My aunt has given me some lessons occasionally in music, and I have been a student at the Art School here, but I know I want better teaching; I ought to have greater advantages if I take up art as a profession. I mean to earn my own living and George's also by it.'

'My dear child, you must not talk of earning your brother's living. That is quite the reverse of what is right. Men must work, and we must help them in every possible way by working with them, but not *for* them. No loyal-hearted boy would dream of being dependent on his sister.'

'I did not mean that George should be dependent on me exactly. I wanted to help him to rise by his own exertions.'

'How old is he?' Mrs. Willoughby asked.

'Sixteen in January.'

'And you, my dear child, are you much older?'

'Four years. I shall be twenty in February. I look older, don't I?'

'Sometimes; but I fancy you take life seriously, and that gives an impression that you are older than your years. But to return to your brother. Is your uncle going to take any steps to find him?'

'He is going to advertise in the local papers and the *Times*, I think he said so, but I have no hope of

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George replying to Mr. Hunter. Do *you* think there is anything I can do ?'

'No. I think after what has passed, and feeling that your brother has chosen his own path, he must be left to tread it. He will probably return, like one of old, when he has felt the dearth of the far country.'

'I am certain that I ought to do something, because I have helped to unsettle him, and thus his going away has been really my fault. Last Christmas I began to feel so anxious to get him away from Mr. Bigsby's school at Broxham and from the Hunters' business, into which Mr. Hunter said he would put him next January. Then it was so hard to see George the butt of my Aunt Katherine's satire. She despised him, and complained of his manners and his dress, and of course *I* knew what she meant, and I simply felt as if I could make any sacrifice for George's sake. That is why I have worked so hard at my pictures, and taken them to Ross's myself; and just when I felt as if my end were likely to be gained, he goes off, without a word, and it is all over!'

'You must not say that, my dear child. It is very likely that your brother may learn a lesson which will benefit him in after years. You must, being, as you say, helpless to help him, now leave him in better hands. Commit him to God continually, and try to feel He will do the best for him, even if the discipline is hard.'

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'Ah!' Frieda said, 'I don't feel *that* sort of comfort. When Mr. Howard preaches about it in those wonderful sermons, I feel it may be true, but not true for *me;* when little Miss Johnstone speaks of love, God's love, being the spring of all service, I don't feel how it could be for *me;* and when you talk of these things, I feel they are *outside* me. I wanted to be happy with my only brother, see him prosperous, and with advantages which my father would have given him. Oh! I have had many dreams of our living together, and my pictures hanging in the Academy, and it is all over now.'

'No; you must not think that,' Mrs. Willoughby said. 'Perhaps, my dear child, this trouble may teach you where to go for help and guidance. If you learn that what Mr. Howard and Miss Johnstone say to you is a great personal reality—not, as you express it, *outside* you—you will perhaps be grateful for the lesson which you now find so hard ——'

Cara's entrance at this moment made Frieda draw herself erect, and Mrs. Willoughby interpreted her desire at once that nothing should be said of her trouble just then. Then Cosy's picture was talked about, and the hours for the sittings arranged, and soon after David and Fraser came up from their work, and so the evening passed pleasantly away.

David walked across the road to the gate of Heathfield with Frieda, and the clear shining of the

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moon, not to-night veiled by floating clouds, shone on Frieda's face. The sad expression there struck the boy with a sudden thrill of sympathy, and their parting was silent.

'I dare say she has told my mother her trouble,' he said, as he turned back to his own door.

His mother was standing there waiting for him, and said:

'What a lovely night, David!'

He made no reply, but coming up the steep steps to his mother's side, he put his arm round her.

'Don't stand moon-gazing,' he said; 'you will be getting neuralgia.'

'You think I am too old for such imprudence,' was the reply; 'but after all the dark and cloudy days we have had, it is delightful to see that deep-blue canopy.'

'Did you comfort that poor girl, mother?' David asked. 'I am sure she wants it. Has anything gone wrong with that brother of hers?'

'Then you know about him, David?'

'I know there is a brother, whom she thinks she ought to help to a better position than a provision merchant's office.'

'When did Frieda tell you this?'

'The day of the scrimmage on the Downs about the orange-girl.'

'Mother! mother!'—it was Cara's voice—'pray

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do not stand at the door ; you will certainly get cold. David ! how can you let her do it ?'

Mrs. Willoughby said :

'You are quite right, Cara, and I deserve a fit of neuralgia for my imprudence.'

'David deserves it for keeping you there,' was Cara's reply, as the door was locked and bolted for the night.

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CHAPTER XII.

BROXHOLME.

MR. HUNTER was in his office as usual on Monday morning; he went direct there from the station, and ordered his breakfast of coffee and eggs to be served in what he called his 'counting room'—an old-fashioned term; but Broxholme was an old-fashioned place, and Mr. Hunter was an old-fashioned man.

He lingered over his breakfast and his letters, for, truth to tell, he was not in haste to go to his wife and say that there was no news of 'her boy.'

Mrs. Hunter was one of those meek-spirited, gentle women, who, with strong maternal instincts, had never had a child. Therefore, when her husband had brought back the rosy, handsome boy from his half-sister's husband's funeral, her heart had gone out to him with a sudden outburst of maternal affection.

'He shall never feel the want of his mother while I live,' she had said as she took the boy to her heart, and faithfully had she kept her resolution.

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Mrs. Hunter knew well enough that there was a gulf set between her husband and the family of Mr. Burnley, who had married his half-sister, of whom he always spoke with a sort of tender reverence, as of something too delicate and refined for the rougher paths of life. 'Poor Ailsie!' was always his preface to any mention of his dead sister, 'she was as pretty a little creature as ever trod the ground; why, her footfall was so light the very daisies didn't feel it.'

Poor Ailsie's boy, in his stalwart build and well-developed figure, had nothing of his mother in him; but Frieda's delicately chiselled features, and especially her sensitive mobile mouth, had brought the sister of his young manhood back to Mr. Hunter's remembrance vividly, and with something of a pathetic power.

'She was wonderfully like poor Ailsie,' he said to himself again, 'but not a bit like the Rose without thorns that Mr. Burnley always called her. Frieda has got a will of her own—and she'd fight to get it, if I am not mistaken.'

Mr. Hunter's private house stood with three or four others in a secluded part of the town. A strip of dingy grass, where two or three melancholy elms still stood—the last survivors of the stately double row which had once made the name of 'Avenue' appropriate—was shut off by iron railings from a road which went round it, but led no-

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where. The houses were red brick, solid and spacious; and fifty years ago it was thought rather a grand thing to inhabit a house in the 'Avenue.' New fashions had reached even old-world Broxholme, and the 'Avenue' was now looked upon only as a convenient place of residence for 'people in trade.'

As Mr. Hunter put his latch-key into the door about one o'clock, he heard the well-known whine of old Jip, a large liver and white spaniel, who had seen the changes and chances of many years. Jip had in his youth been obliged to submit to the intrusion of a rival, and conceived for George Burnley a wholesome aversion; but Jip, like most of us, had to accept the inevitable, and the aversion ended in affection, which was as strong on the boy's side as the dog's.

'Well, Jip, my boy. No, no; there's nobody behind me,' as the dog sniffed at the closing door, and whined an inquiry. 'No, no, Jip; he isn't there. We must forget him, eh, Jip?'

Mr. Hunter's voice, as he addressed the dog, brought Mrs. Hunter from the back premises, where she had been trying to forget her anxiety in making apple jelly.

'Well, John,' she said, untying a large apron as she spoke, and advancing to receive her husband's kiss. 'Well, John, any news?'

'No, my dear; no. They know no more of him

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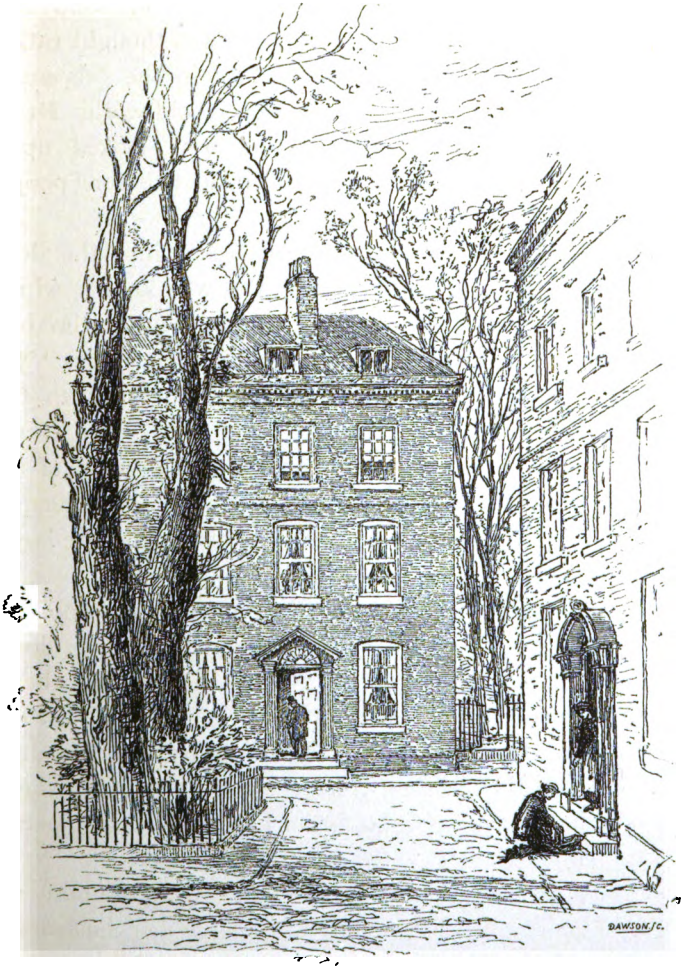

THE AVENUE.

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at Valehead than we do. There is nothing to be done but advertise.'

'Do advertise at once, John. I feel as if the boy was dead.'

'I don't, then,' said Mr. Hunter; 'and he has got enough to keep him, you see.'

'You did not tell *that* part to the people at Valehead, John?'

'I told the sister, Frieda—as pretty a girl as I ever saw, very like poor Ailsie, only with a spirit. Well, now, my dear,' Mr. Hunter said, turning his back to the bright, clear fire in the dining-room, 'you must not fret any more. You have nothing to blame yourself for, so there's no use in wearing yourself to a thread-paper. How comfortable it all looks here!' he said, subsiding into his large leather chair by the fire, and stretching out his legs. 'Tell me of a house like this before your paste-board villas with their grand names. I wouldn't live in one rent-free.'

Mrs. Hunter was stroking the creases out of the spotless damask table-cloth, which she had helped the servant to lay on the table, and with the plate basket in her hand was arranging spoons and forks with neat precision. The silver shone brightly, and the tumblers were clear as crystal. To be sure, the loaf was put in a trencher on the table, and Ruth, after placing the dishes top and bottom, retired to cool her hot face, while her master and

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mistress waited on themselves; but the plates were excellently clean, and the sirloin of beef done to a turn, to which Mr. Hunter did ample justice, though his wife made only a pretence at eating her dinner.

George's empty plate smote her with a sense of loss, and she was silently taxing her memory with any shortcomings on her part which might have brought affairs to a climax. Very patiently had Mrs. Hunter borne George's disparaging remarks as to many little matters—remarks which had been on the increase ever since his visit to Valehead during the last Christmas holidays. These remarks had irritated Mr. Hunter, and so had his perpetual reference to Lady Katherine and Gerard, Maude's beauty, and the splendour of Lady Katherine's diamonds; but Mrs. Hunter had only been hurt, not angry, and her efforts to make things more after the pattern of the *ménage* at Heathfield were pathetic, as a proof of her love for George.

'What did Frieda say about George?' Mrs. Hunter ventured to ask, when Ruth had reappeared to remove the meat and vegetables dishes, and returned with a Stilton cheese and some celery. 'There was no need of puddings and pastry now,' Mrs. Hunter thought; 'neither of us care for them except on Sundays by way of a treat for Ruth and the girl.' 'The girl' was the ephemeral in-

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habitant of the kitchen, who under that title passed through it on a short tenure of service, to be trained by Ruth and her mistress, and then sent forth to take a better placé.

Most of 'the girls' turned out so well that it was considered quite a badge of distinction to have lived at Mrs. Hunter's in the Avenue for a year.

'What did Frieda say?' Mrs. Hunter repeated.

'Say? she turned as white as a sheet. I thought she was going to faint; she is as bad as you are about the boy.'

'I should like to see her,' Mrs. Hunter said. 'I wish I could see her; will she come here if I ask her, John?'

'Well, there will be two words about that. Her ladyship is safe to raise an objection; but you can ask her, you know. She has not much at Downside Park to make her happy, I expect. I saw none of the pictures the boy used to talk about, but I expect she makes something by them.'

'May I write to her?' Mrs. Hunter asked. 'I don't want to offend her.'

'Offend her! Ellen, I tell you that you are a great deal too soft-hearted. For my part, I have no patience with airs and nonsense; why, if I chose, I might take a country-house and keep a lot of idle servants, but I don't choose. I would rather help

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those who want help, and give money to charities, in the place where I was born and bred.'

'I know there are many you help, dear John, of whom I never hear. I know how good you are. I am sure I don't go in for airs and pride; but I fancy, John, we made a mistake about George. We forgot how time had gone on, and people's ideas changed since we were young. I often wish we had sent the boy away to school; he would have valued home more if we had, and then those quarrels with the young Thompsons and Bakers would have been avoided; but we acted for the best, and——'

Here Mrs. Hunter paused; a large portly figure passed by the two large windows of the dining-room, and the bell rang.

'It is Mr. Bigsby!' she exclaimed; 'perhaps he has had news. I will let him in.'

Mr. Bigsby was a heavy, self-important person, who had been the master of the 'Academy for young gentlemen' for many years. His father had been master before him, and he had filled the post of usher to him before he took office himself as head of the very prosperous commercial school, where the sons of the leading tradesmen and the farmers of the neighbourhood had been content to receive their education for several generations.

Mr. Bigsby responded with a due amount of pompous courtesy to Mrs. Hunter's greeting, and

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made for one of the large leather armchairs by the bright fire, and as he sank into it:

'Well, sir, any news of the runaway?'

'No, Mr. Bigsby; no.'

'Foolish boy, to leave comfort, and I may say affluence, for a freak! However, sir,' said Mr. Bigsby, graciously accepting Mrs. Hunter's offer of a glass of brown sherry—'however, sir, of this we may be pretty sure, "pride will have a fall." The want of money, sir, will soon bring the young fellow back; and then, sir, if my advice is worth anything, I say shut him up on bread and water, and make him feel you are not to be trifled with. I confess I am sorry to lose the boy; he was handsome and clever, and stood second in our first class. He had an easy address, and I may say he was not a boy to be ashamed of. But the continual complaints from his schoolfellows' parents became an annoyance, and I am glad to have an end put to that, at any rate. Are you going to advertise, sir?'

'Yes, yes, I am, in all the leading papers hereabouts, and in the *Times* and *Daily News;* and having done that, I must leave the matter, as I tell my wife, in God's hands. If we never see him again, I may yet feel I have done my duty by my sister's son, and, as far as I know, I have nothing to reproach myself with. Why, sir, this house and all in it would have been his at my death; a share in the business, which Mr. Brett understood; and

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there's many a young fellow would jump at George's chances.'

'Mrs. Hunter, you must cheer up,' Mr. Bigsby said, turning to his kind hostess, who was replenishing his glass, and had through a mist of tears set before him, on a little round table, a plate of delicious ginger biscuits, all crisp and delicate. 'You must cheer up, Mrs. Hunter; as I said, the boy will come back, and will have learned a wholesome lesson. The want of money will bring him.'

Ah, the money! Neither of these kind and good people breathed a word of the loss of the money, which weighed so heavily on poor Mrs. Hunter. Like Frieda, the cry of her heart was, 'Anything but that; if he had asked me, he should have had all he wanted; but to go away without a word, and take with him what was not his own'—here lay the exceeding bitterness of Mrs. Hunter's trial, shared, though she did not know it, by the sister, who was perpetually tortured with the thought, 'It is all *my* fault, my fault.'

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CHAPTER XIII.

AN ARRIVAL.

HAVE you been at the Willoughbys' again to-day, Frieda?' Lady Katherine asked; 'you seem very intimate with them. I think, my love, that friendships with comparative strangers are apt to cool quickly, and it would be as well not to go to St. Winifred's every day.'

'I shall have to go every day for some time. I am painting little Cosy's picture.'

'Oh, indeed!' said Lady Katherine drily; 'that *is* an act of friendship. By-the-bye, Frieda, when we dine out together again, do not think it necessary to speak of your art as bringing in money. It is not exactly what I approve, I confess. I heard you telling that very gentleman-like curate who took you in the other evening, that you had painted that picture at Ross's, and that it was for sale.'

'I was asked the question; how could I answer in any other way, Aunt Katherine? The picture of "Her only Friend" is to be sold, and I do want the money. I have every hope of one day being inde-

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pendent, and I look forward to it with the greatest longing.'

'You are very impetuous, Frieda, and need self-control; of course I know it is now the fashion with some people in these days to press forward young women to earn their living as they say, and that art and literature are made sadly commercial. But such notions do *not* suit me. I have never been used to them; and therefore, while you are under my roof, please preserve silence about the use of your brush as a "means of living." You are too young to strike out in any independent fashion, and therefore we need not discuss the matter.'

The soreness at Frieda's heart after conversation like this with her aunt, I have no words to describe. It was not only the soreness of wounded pride, but there was the deeper pain that her brother, for whom all her plans had been laid, still maintained silence, and that she was no longer able to help him. If she could only know where he was, she would be relieved; but this silence was intolerable, and the worst part of her trouble about George could not be told to any human ear. The hours spent at the Willoughbys' were the happiest she knew. Cosy's picture grew and flourished, and was a source of perpetual interest to the brothers and sister, with whom Cosy was such a great pet.

The Christmas holidays came on, and the boys and Gerard began to fraternize, taking walks together

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and getting up entertainments in the large lower rooms on the basement story, which always figure in the agent's lists as 'breakfast-rooms.' They were admirably adapted for charades and 'penny readings' and recitals, and Fraser's violin was in great request.

Maude found these afternoons with the Willoughbys so pleasant that her mother had to complain of her perpetual running in and out, as well as of Frieda. And she would doubtless have put a stop to it if she could. It was, however, no easy matter to control Maude; and if she could not get her own way by coaxing and flattery, she would get it by direct opposition to her mother's wishes.

'What you can all find so attractive in the Willoughbys, I can't imagine,' Lady Katherine said to Maude one day, when she was wrapped up in furs for a drive in the brougham, and desired Maude to accompany her.

'I am going over to St. Winifred's, darling Mumsie. We are getting up a concert for the benefit of the Children's Hospital, and we are to charge sixpence for the tickets, and I am going to help with the programmes. It's a great secret: don't tell, Mumsie.'

'I am not likely to tell such an absurd thing to anyone, Maude. How magnificent the profits will be!'

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'Oh, of course you may give more than sixpence; and of course you will come, Mumsie. How sweet you look in that bonnet! I never saw one which became you so well, you darling!'

'Now then, lovey, don't be too rapturous!' Lady Katherine exclaimed, retreating from Maude's rather rough embrace. 'See now, you have spoiled the set of the strings.'

'No, I haven't; good-bye, dearest Mumsie.'

Lady Katherine departed, quite forgetting that Maude had disobeyed her wishes, and that she had only ten minutes before desired her to get ready at once to drive with her to Oatlands, a place in the neighbourhood where there were some girls whom she wished Maude to know. This condition of things between a mother and child is most disastrous. Maude knew that she had gained her point by flattery, of which her mother was so susceptible, and would take care to try the same prescription another time. The influence a mother who is filled with the idea of her own personal attractions has upon a girl of Maude's age is always a bad influence. The outside world is apt to speak harshly of a woman who cannot grow old gracefully, whose chief idea is to keep up an appearance of youth, and who chooses her dress with that end in view. But the condemnation of the outside world is nothing when compared with the disrespect which such mothers kindle in the hearts of their young sons and daughters.

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As Maude flew off to St. Winifred's, she said to herself:

'I can make Mumsie do anything if I tell her she looks lovely. But that *is* a pretty bonnet, and the *toupée* becomes her. Still I could not fancy Mrs. Willoughby sticking on a fringe.'

Maude was warmly welcomed in the Willoughbys' schoolroom that afternoon, for she was full of spirits and fun, and had so far turned her brightest side towards the Willoughbys. The younger boys were at her feet, and ready to do anything she wished, while David was obliged to confess she was a very enlivening element in the daily life of these holidays.

'Well,' she said, tossing her hat off, and divesting herself of her thick jacket, 'here I am! Have you settled the programme, and who is to sing, and what, and who is to read, and all that?'

'David has written out what he thinks will do,' Fraser said, 'and I shall like it very much if you will play with me.'

'I'll try what I can do, but I do get terribly out of tune, and that puts a violin out.'

Oh, I am sure you will play beautifully,' said Gilbert; 'and Cara is to sing, and David will read a bit of the "Merchant of Venice" with your brother Gerard, and Frieda.'

Maude thought she would like to read the 'Merchant of Venice,' and determined to work upon David for that end.

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'Where is your brother?' she asked of Cara.

'He is reading. He always reads from half-past two to five, you know.'

'How tiresome it is when people are so good! I should think he might leave the books alone in the holidays. Gerard never opens one. He says boys get on better who don't.'

'That's my belief,' said Gilbert, yawning, 'and I know heaps of fellows who say the same.'

'Have you settled the day of the concert?' Maude asked, 'and how many people are to come?'

'We know so few people here,' said Cara. 'David has one or two friends he wants to come, and your brother said he should invite some of his.'

'It won't be any fun if there is no audience,' said Maude. 'We could squeeze in forty people.'

'Forty! Oh, I am sure we shall not get forty,' Cara exclaimed; 'and mother would not like to have so many, I know.'

'Then where is the profit to come from for the hospital? I think we had better give up the whole thing.'

'I don't,' said Cara calmly. 'Mother always likes the boys to have something to amuse and occupy them with preparation in the holidays at home. Now, if you like, you can write out this big programme, which Edgar is going to illuminate in red and blue letters.'

'I see! a sort of hand-bill. I should like to try;

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only can't I have a part in the "Merchant of Venice"?'

'David settles all that,' said Cara. 'I thought you were to play with Fraser.'

Maude pouted a little, but being hopeful of winning over David, she said she would practise over the 'Last Rose of Summer' with Fraser, who, quite delighted, ran off for his violin, and began to tune it. Edgar and Gilbert were looking out for Gerard Burnley, and little Cosy was sitting for Frieda's picture. The winter daylight was waning, and Frieda began to put away her brushes, and Cosy trotted off in great glee to join the others in the play-room.

'Mrs. Willoughby,' Frieda said, 'I have had another letter from Mrs. Hunter—my aunt I ought to call her. She seems to wish me to go to Broxholme very much. What shall I do?'

'What does Lady Katherine say?' Mrs. Willoughby asked.

'I never mention the subject of the Hunters or George to her. Of course, if I decide to go to Broxholme I shall tell her—ask her leave. I must finish Cosy's picture first, however. Poor Mrs. Hunter writes to me as if we had a common grief in the loss of George, and *that* is such a comfort. You cannot think how lonely I feel in my aunt's house now, far more so than ever. The one subject which is always before me is nothing to anybody at Heathfield; and

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if it were not for you, I cannot think how I should bear it.'

'How I wish, my dear child,' said Mrs. Willoughby tenderly, 'oh, how I wish I could feel that you are telling this trouble to God, and seeking His help to bear it.'

Frieda was silent; she always shrank back, like a sensitive plant, from any words which might be said to strike at the very root of the whole matter.

'I am different from you,' she said. 'I don't feel as if God could know about this, or any small trouble like mine. It seems impossible.'

'My dear child, I do not know how to meet that very common excuse for not seeking and finding, except by His own words when with us on earth: "Only believe. All things are possible to him that believeth."'

'Yes,' Frieda said sadly, 'I know that is in the Bible, and I wish I could take it to myself as you and Pennella Johnstone do. I always think,' she continued, 'that you and poor Pennella are alike. She is very shy and retiring, and never will go anywhere for fear of pushing herself in; but I wish you would go and see her one day, will you?'

'Indeed I will, and perhaps we can persuade her to come to the boys' entertainment. When shall we go and see her?'

'Can you walk as far, do you think?'

'How far is it?'

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'About a mile and a half. I am not good at measuring distances, but I very soon get there.'

'I know how swiftly you get over the ground, my dear; but as I am a good deal more than twice your age, you must make allowance for my less speedy arrival at Miss Johnstone's. But I will promise to come to-morrow afternoon perhaps, if it is fine, like to-day.'

'And about my visit to Mrs. Hunter?' Frieda said.

'I think it might be as well for you to go, if Lady Katherine gives you leave.'

'You can read the letter if you like,' Frieda said, taking from her pocket a letter and giving it to Mrs. Willoughby with heightened colour.

There was no bad spelling in that letter, nor was it untidy or blotted. Indeed, if it had a fault, it was too neat. The paper was thick and highly glazed. The pen which had been used was evidently a fine steel pen, and there was in the letter, both in style and writing, something which told of a different order of things to that which surrounded Frieda. The curl of the y's and g's, and the bend of the h's and b's, were very long, and the signature, 'Ellen Hunter,' had a curious flourish, which would have provoked Lady Katherine's satire.

Nevertheless, real sorrow of heart and sympathy with Frieda could be easily read between these closely written lines, and Mrs. Willoughby had eyes to discover this.

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'MY DEAR FRIEDA,

'I was pleased to receive your kind letter. I now write again to inquire if you think you can conveniently pay me a visit at Broxholme. I am aware that there may be difficulties; but, dear Frieda, I have a great pain at my heart, and the loss of dear George is before me morning, noon, and night. If I am not mistaken, you feel in a measure as I do, and it might be some consolation to us both to exchange the thoughts and hopes and fears which we cannot help indulging about our poor George.

'There are things connected with this heavy trial which cannot be put on paper. Thus, my dear Frieda, I can only add that your company would be a solace to me.

'Accept my love, and

'Believe me to remain,

'Your sincerely affectionate,

'ELLEN HUNTER.

'P.S.—My love for our poor lost George was that of a mother. I reproach myself hourly for many things which at the time I did for the best. Uncle will meet you any day and hour if you name a train.'

'Poor Mrs. Hunter!' Mrs. Willoughby said, as she replaced the letter in the envelope and returned it to Frieda. 'She has, I am sure, an affectionate heart. Yes, I think you must try to get to Brox-

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holme. If I were you, I would deal openly with Lady Katherine, and tell her you wish to pay your uncle a visit.'

'I think I must and *ought* to go,' Frieda said; 'but I don't think I wish to go, which I dare say you will think very contradictious of me. It is a misfortune to have relations in a different rank of life to one's self. Of course I don't mean poor relations; that is quite a different matter. People may be poor, and yet perfectly well bred—little Miss Johnstone, for instance—but money without refinement is dreadful.'

'I see no want of refinement of feeling in that letter, my dear Frieda.'

'It is like a dressmaker's hand,' Frieda said, 'and the style like that of a "ready letter-writer" book. Well, I shall see what I can do with Aunt Katherine. What a noise they are making downstairs! don't you mind it?'

'I have been too well used to the noise of boys to mind it; but as I think David cannot be there, I will go down and investigate matters.'

'I hear Maude's laugh,' Frieda said; 'I should know that anywhere. She and Gerard give you plenty of their company now.

'Won't you come down with me and see what the uproar is about? It sounds good-tempered, so I do not mind; but for all that, it is a little too loud for the sake of the neighbours;' and Mrs. Willoughby

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disappeared down the steep flight of stairs leading to the basement story.

Frieda was hesitating whether to follow or not, when David came down into the little lobby.

'What a row they are making downstairs,' he said, 'or rather have been making,' for there was a sudden lull in the storm, caused by Mrs. Willoughby's entrance.

'Your mother is gone downstairs now,' Frieda said. 'Good-bye!'

'Where are you going?'

'Home. I have been standing at the easel all day, and I am rather tired.'

'I am sure you must be; and I have been reading till I can't see, and I am tired too.'

'What are you reading for now? It's the holidays; you ought to enjoy them.'

'Ah! so I do; but I have made up my mind to go up and have a shot for the Balliol next October, and I have to work even on, if I wish to succeed.'

'I should say you were sure to succeed. If you were my brother, how proud I should be of you! It is so delightful to be proud of those you love, and so dreadful to be ashamed of them.'

The word slipped out, and Frieda feared it might imply more than she wished David to know.

'Good-bye!' and before he could stop her she was gone, and running down the steep flight of steps,

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crossed the dividing road, and had shut the little iron gate of Heathfield behind her.

The front door was not latched, and, turning the handle, Frieda went into the square lobby, and, opening the drawing-room door, looked round to discover if her aunt had returned from her drive.

A figure rose from Lady Katherine's deep chair by the fire, but it was not Lady Katherine.

'George!' Frieda exclaimed. 'Oh, George, how could you treat me so!'

'Come now, Frieda, give a fellow a welcome, and don't stand staring at me as if I were a ghost;' for Frieda, after the first kiss, had drawn back a little, and stood motionless.

'George,' she said, 'you can't stay here; Aunt Katherine would be so dreadfully angry if she saw you. We should have a scene, and I can't bear it. You must go, George. Who let you in?'

'I let myself in.'

'How long ago?'

'About ten minutes.'

'Then nobody knows you are here, and, if you go at once, nobody need know. I will come with you, and as we walk you can tell me all about it. Oh, George, I entreat you to come,' Frieda said imploringly. 'Come, and I will help you in every possible way that is right; but if you are seen here, it is all over.'

'Well, don't make such a fuss, Frieda; I will

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come out with you, but why should I not stay here? I am not come to beg,' he said. 'I have got some money, so you need not be afraid of that.'

The ungraciousness of this speech did not fail to strike Frieda; but she led the way out of the house, and turning round by the side-road up which carriages seldom passed, she hoped to avoid meeting the brougham with her Aunt Katherine in it. She walked swiftly along, George having some trouble to keep up with her, and, till she felt there was comparative safety in the streets and byways of Whitelands, she did not speak.

George meanwhile had coolly taken out a cigar, and, striking a fusee, had lighted it. There was nothing about him to show that he was really a run-away, and that the circumstances of his flight from his uncle's house at Broxholme had not been too creditable to him. The distress and uncertainty about what ought to be done were Frieda's. To all outward seeming, George was in no distress or perplexity whatever.

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CHAPTER XIV.

REFUGE.

FRIEDA waited till they had reached the unfashionable quarter where little Miss Johnstone lived, and then she turned into a square where she and her brother might walk round and round unnoticed.

'George,' she said at last, 'Mr. Hunter came here some weeks ago, and told me of your behaviour. Oh, George, it is too dreadful!'

'What is *too* dreadful?' he asked, imitating the emphasis she laid on the word. 'I thought you always wished me, and advised me, to cut the Hunters and old Bigsby's academy.'

This was a sore thrust at Frieda; but she did not attempt to deny his assertion—she could not do so.

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'You know, George,' she said, 'you took money with you which was not yours.'

'I only borrowed it. I wrote to him and told him so. I am not a thief. He can pay himself back with some money of my mother's. You know when you come of age you will have two or three hundred pounds, like me. Where was the harm of borrowing a paltry fifty pounds?'

'Oh, great harm, George! it has grieved me more than anything else; and poor Mrs. Hunter—Aunt Ellen—she has been miserable. George, come with me to the station, the Whiteland Road station, and let us telegraph to Mr. Hunter that you are coming back to him.'

'A likely matter!' George said. 'No, I am well out of Broxholme, though I am sorry about Aunt Ellen. She was so awfully fond of me, and used to take my part in every row; but I can't go back.'

'Well, George, what is it you wish to do? What *have* you been doing all this time?'

'Oh, no harm; don't look so frightened. I went to London—I had never been to London; fancy a fellow of my age never having been to London! *that* will show you how much the Hunters did for me. I have seen plenty there that has made me open my eyes. I did not know what theatres meant before; I know now, and I am glad I do. But I had a reason for going to London. One of the better sort of fellows at old Bigsby's school,

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who went out to India and died there, had an uncle, a doctor, in Russell Square. He knew nothing about me; but I called, and told him I wanted advice about medical training. I humbugged him a little, you know; brought in the grand relations—her ladyship at Downside Park, and so on. He took a fancy to me, and I was a good deal at his house. I told him I was an orphan, and that I had a great fancy to be a doctor. The old fellow told me I must first pass an easy preliminary examination, in the College of Preceptors; and that if I had friends at Valehead I could do this there as well as in London, and then I might see how I got on for a year at the Valehead Medical School. So that is what I mean to do; and I thought I might have lived at Heathfield with you, and studied at Valehead. Do you understand now?'

'Yes, I understand, George; but I do not in the least approve of what you are doing. You ought to go back to the Hunters first, and make it right with them. Ask to be forgiven, and then see what they will do for you. Yes, there is no doubt you ought to go back.'

'I do call that good,' George said, 'when it is you who have been preaching to me all the time to give up the provision merchant's office. Well, if you won't help me, you must leave it alone.'

'George, you know I will help you, for our dear

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mother's sake, who was so proud of you. Let *me* be proud of you, too, George. You are still only a boy—scarcely sixteen. There is plenty of time before you; go back to Broxholme to-morrow, and tell the truth.'

'I dare say! I shall do no such thing. I find hotels very dear work. So I must try and find a lodging, and inquire about the examination myself. I dare say that old Doctor would take me into his house, only it would cost so much money.'

'I think I can get you a lodging here, in the house of a friend of mine, Miss Johnstone: only she is very poor and works for her living—so she must be paid. *I* will pay her, for I would not think of touching Mr. Hunter's money. If you will walk up and down here, I will go and see what I can do.'

'Or I can go to the Imperial Hotel to-night,' George suggested.

'Oh, no! no! I am sure hotels are not safe for you;' and Frieda immediately thought of billiards and the bar, and other dangers which she had heard and read of as besetting young men at hotels. 'If you will wait here, I will run to Miss Johnstone's, and find out if she can take you in.'

'Don't be long,' George called out, as Frieda left him, 'or I shall be tired of waiting in this square.'

Frieda met Pennella coming in from Queen's

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Court. She looked tired, and did not speak as brightly as usual.

'The Interior,' which had not been a task to give her much pleasure in the doing, was finished, and she had taken it over to the lady at Eastbury, who had ordered it.

The sum agreed on had been a very moderate one, but no cheque was forthcoming; and Pennella was wondering how the gas bill for the last quarter, the coal merchant, and the rent could be paid. These cares, which we are all apt to call 'sordid cares,' pressed heavily on little Miss Johnstone's brave heart, and she was wondering within herself, as she walked home from Queen's Court, how it felt to be at ease about expenditure. This working for daily needs is not an experience to be envied. There are moments of depression, when, like Pennella, those who depend on payment for their work, whether in art or music or literature, cannot help feeling as if a big wave were in pursuit, and that it is quite within the range of probability that it may overtake and engulf the most persistent runner before the shore is reached.

They are very few who do not know something of Pennella's feelings as she was haunted by a sense of working in vain, and very few who may not say that they have come to a point when—

> 'They have borne all they could endure,
> And bare not always well.'

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'Miss Johnstone! Pennella!' Frieda exclaimed; 'I want to speak to you very particularly. I won't keep you five minutes; may I come in?'

Pennella was too well aware of the impossibility of privacy in her home to take Frieda inside the garden-gate.

'I am rather tired,' she said; 'but I will walk back with you as far as St. John's Church, and then you can tell me what it is.'

'It is that I am in great distress about George. He is here, and I dare not let Aunt Katherine know. I really cannot bear to tell her. Will you let George stay with you, if I pay you? I can pay you; and if you take him in, he will be safe. Oh, *do* let him come!'

Little Miss Johnstone paused, and looking up at Frieda, she said: 'My dear, I must take time for consideration.'

'Whether you can afford it?' Frieda asked hastily. 'I would pay you just what anybody else would.'

'It is not that at all, my dear; should I be right to take in a boy who has run away from good kind friends, and has really no definite object in view?'

'He has! he has!' Frieda exclaimed. 'He wants to be a doctor. He wants to pass the preliminary examination here. He can do it now, as the College of Preceptors have a centre at Valehead. Oh, *don't* refuse me! I feel that if I lose sight of George

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now, I may never hear any more of him; that he will get lower down; join some low theatre, or—— Oh, pray help me!'

'I think all I can say is, that I will receive your brother for a week; and when you have told his relations that he is here, perhaps your uncle will come and settle what step to take next. I cannot possibly lend myself to any secret plan about your brother. He is a mere boy, and ought to be under authority. But I do not wish to seem unkind to you, my dear, and therefore if you will at once explain fully to your brother, I will let him stay in my house till his friends, his best friends, are consulted.'

'Very well. I will go to Broxholme to Aunt Ellen's —she is Mrs. Hunter you know—who has invited me. I will get leave to go to-morrow, if you will keep George. Only he must not go to Downside Park. There is only one person I can trust about him except you, and that is David Willoughby. I am certain he would give George advice, and keep the secret. If I can get him to ask George to take a walk, then I shall be satisfied. He is walking round and round Alexandra Square waiting for me; will you come and speak to him?'

Little Miss Johnstone was more tired than she cared to confess, but she put her arm through Frieda's, and they turned into Alexandra Square. The lamps were lighted, and the daylight fading.

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'Oh, I don't see him!' Frieda exclaimed, in an agony of distress. 'Oh, I am afraid he is gone! no, there he is;' and in another moment they had overtaken George.

'Hallo, Frieda! what an age you have been! I was just going off to the Imperial.'

'George,' Frieda said, 'this is Miss Johnstone, a great friend of mine. She has been so kind as to say you may stay with with her till—till we see what it is best to do.'

George bowed politely, and Pennella could not help admiring his fine tall figure, well-knit and well-proportioned, and his handsome face.

But an artist, especially one who studies character as well as features, does not fail to be a tolerably correct interpreter of what is written on a face.

The weakness of George Burnley's mouth struck Pennella at once; it had no firm lines, and the chin retreated a little; but the eyes were soft and of a beautiful colour, shaded by long lashes; and a straight nose and clear fresh complexion made George a good-looking, handsome boy. He looked much older than his years, and his manner and bearing were not those of the usual type of schoolboy at sixteen.

He affected an easy, indifferent manner, which he had been trying to cultivate ever since his last visit to Downside Park a year before; and being exceed-

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ingly well satisfied with himself, it is no marvel that his good homely uncle, and many of his school-fellows at Broxholme, called by Mrs. Hunter 'those Bakers and Thompsons,' were irritated by his self-assertion.

'I am sure it is very kind of you,' George said, addressing Miss Johnstone; 'but I think, as I have left a little luggage at the Imperial, I had better dine and sleep there.'

'Oh, George, you must not do that; you are kindly invited to Miss Johnstone's house, and——'

And now Pennella's straightforward directness of aim and words came well to the front.

'Your sister,' she said, 'is a great and dear friend of mine. She has told me of the difficulty of your position; and as she knows I am obliged to work for my living, she offers me a suitable remuneration for receiving you. I am sure you will not think of allowing yourself to be dependent a day longer than you can help upon your sister. You will be welcome to remain with me for a week, till some decision is made. My father and my sister are both invalids, and I am very much occupied; but I will give you a fire in your room, and you can sit there when not inclined to join us downstairs.'

George was very much taken by surprise by this quiet, decided way of 'putting his affairs.' He did not like it at all, and his voice betrayed irritation as he said to Frieda, in an undertone:

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'I wish you had not meddled.'

Miss Johnstone saw the vexation on George's face, and the sadness on Frieda's, though she did not catch what he had said.

'I thought it better to speak plainly,' Miss Johnstone said; 'and as I am, I should think, more than twice as old as you are, I hope you will not think me impertinent when I say that if your kind friends can be persuaded to receive you again at Broxholme, you should return at once.'

George murmured something in reply, which was not very audible, but he felt the power of Miss Johnstone's quiet determination. He walked to the Imperial with his sister, brought away his bag, paying a bill the amount of which Frieda caught sight of with some amazement, and telling the waiter who gave him the receipt that he was going to stay at a house 'in the neighbourhood,' and should not want his room that night, he went with Frieda to Manilla Place, where Miss Johnstone had preceded them; and his sister, with a sigh of relief, saw the door close on him.

It was getting very late, and Frieda had to walk at her swiftest pace across the Downs. Her mind was made up now, and she determined to go to Broxholme the very next day.

'I will tell Aunt Katherine I am going, and there will be an end of it. It's tiresome about Cosy's picture, but it is so far forward that I can soon make

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up for a few days' absence. I will go to Broxholme whatever happens.'

The door of Heathfield was not on the latch now, and Frieda's knock and ring was answered by Gerard.

'I say,' he exclaimed, 'how late you are! I don't think you ought to be scampering over the Downs in the dark like this.'

'It's not dark,' said Frieda angrily; 'please mind your own business.'

'Don't be so cross,' Gerard said; 'and what are you going into the drawing-room for? There are half a dozen old fogies at afternoon tea.'

'I want to speak to Aunt Katherine,' she said.

'Well, if I were you I would wait; you won't get a very warm reception. There's a parson there also. I heard him talking about your picture at Ross's, and he was well snubbed for his pains.'

'Where is Maude? Is she still at the Willoughbys'?'

'Yes; I believe so. I was rather sick of it; they are making such a fuss about their concert. Old General Hawkins came to see Mrs. Willoughby, and little Bernard told him about it. He took ten shillings' worth of tickets, and that was considered a great triumph. I say, Frieda, I wish you would read over the "Merchant of Venice" with me. I don't know much about it, and I may as well try to

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get it up decently, as after all there will be some people looking on. It is extraordinary to me how Mrs. Willoughby can allow everything to be pulled about as she does, and talk about this concert as if it were the most serious thing in the world. I am going to invite Collingwood and his sister; and Prothero, and one or two others. I like the whole lot over there except one.'

'Who is the one?'

'You know who I mean. The wonderful David—he is too good for me.'

'I shall not be here at the reading or concert, or whatever you like to call it,' Frieda said. 'Maude must take my part, and she is to play the duet with Fraser.'

'Where are you going? Oh, I say, it will spoil it all if you go away. I shall have no more to do with it.'

'Nonsense, Gerard! I shall make very little difference. There! the people are going now. I must try and catch Aunt Katherine.'

Gerard and Frieda were in the schoolroom, and could hear the good-byes and soft speeches of the departing guests.

To judge only from Lady Katherine's tone, it might have been supposed that every one of her guests was very especially delightful.

'It is *so* pleasant to have seen you; it is so good of you to come. I am so glad I had returned from

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my drive. Can I lend you a wrap, dear Mrs. Hawkins? Good-bye.'

Frieda waited till the hall-door had been closed, and then went in behind her aunt, who had come out into the little square hall to say her last words.

'Aunt Katherine!' Frieda began.

'My dear, how you startled me! I have had such an infliction with those dull Miss Watsons and old Mrs. Sanderson. Really, I shall be glad when I have some one at hand to relieve me in these social duties. Of course, you ought to do so, though it does not seem to strike you.'

'Aunt Katherine, I am very anxious to go to Broxholme to-morrow, to see Mrs. Hunter. She has asked me to do so, and I wish to go very much. Can I go?'

'Well, really, my dear, I do not, I confess, see why you should trouble yourself to do so; and to any girl of your age except yourself, the journey with no escort would be a great difficulty.'

'I particularly wish to go, Aunt Katherine, and I can post a letter to Mrs. Hunter to-night, to say I shall arrive about three o'clock. I can do so easily if I leave here at half-past ten.'

'I suppose you are going to try to make out something about this boy, George. He is not worth it, my dear, depend upon it; you had much better leave him to himself. He won't thank you for interference.'

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A prolonged yawn followed this last sentence, and then Lady Katherine said:

'Mr. Harcourt, the clergyman who took you down to dinner at Mrs. Hill's, was here this afternoon, and was inquiring about your picture. I think it rather impertinent of a man of his age to speak to me on the subject of money. I told him I really did not know what you expected for the Cat, and rather repressed him. The Miss Watsons were all ears, and will go and gossip about you and your pictures forthwith, which is not very agreeable.'

'I am sure I don't mind what such people say or think,' Frieda said proudly. 'Mr. Harcourt was very kind to me that night, and told me a great deal about the galleries at Florence and Rome, and I am not at all sorry I told him that I wanted to take up Art as a profession. But, Aunt Katherine, will you give your consent for me to go to Broxholme to-morrow? It is very important that I should do so. I am sure my uncle would say I was right.'

'Your dear uncle,' Lady Katherine said, 'was the best and kindest of men, but was utterly unpractical; he was far too tender-hearted, as I often told him. However, you are of an age to choose for yourself whether to keep up intercourse with these vulgar relations or drop it. You can go to Broxholme if you wish, and you can give an order for a fly to be here at ten to-morrow morning.'

This was all Frieda wanted. She rushed away to

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her room, and wrote to Mrs. Hunter, naming the day and hour. She added, in a postscript:

'I have good news'—but crossed out the word 'good,' and substituted *some* news—'of George.—F.B.'

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CHAPTER XV.

ST. BENEDICT'S CAVE.

MR. GEORGE ST. ANDREW BURNLEY was anything but pleased with the turn affairs had taken. He did not at all appreciate the shabby little sitting-room at Miss Johnstone's; and his presence caused a great confusion in poor Mr. Johnstone's always confused mind, while Amy looked at him from her sofa and tried to attract his attention.

'Delighted to see you, sir,' Mr. Johnstone said. 'Favour me with your name. Penelope, here is your brother returned at last. Sir, my son is ambassador at the court of the King of Siam, and you would, I am sure, be pleased to make his acquaintance. Pennella, who did you say this young man was?'

However tired or however perplexed Pennella felt, she never spoke crossly to her father. No mother was ever more patient to a sick, feeble child than was this daughter to her poor distraught father. She could remember him young and vigorous, inheriting a fortune from his father, and beginning

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life with the fairest hopes. Speculation had wrecked these hopes, as it has done the hopes of thousands within the last fifty years, and the utter loss of money broke down the whole man. A brain fever left him but the shadow of his former self; and his wife, worn out with sorrow and anxiety, left Pennella at eighteen to fight the hard battle of life, and she became, as we know, the mainstay of the whole family. Her only brother had but added to the burden of her already heavy load, and it was now some years since he had been heard of. He flitted before the bewildered brain of the poor father, and took many shapes and forms. The latest—that he was an ambassador at the court of the King of Siam—was as baseless as any other of the fancies which filled his life.

George rather won upon Amy's favour by his good looks, and she roused herself after tea to have a game of draughts with him: and Pennella found, to her relief, that his presence was not unwelcome to her poor invalids.

The evening after tea passed pleasantly, and George indulged in a good deal of the 'tall talk' which had so often irritated Mr. Hunter. It had a soothing effect on Amy Johnstone, and she believed a great deal, the authenticity of which her sister, who was sitting quietly by, mending a dress, very much doubted. At half-past nine Penelope rang the bell, and the neat little maid-servant came in with her

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Bible. Miss Johnstone read a chapter in her clear, distinct voice, and then a prayer. The earnestness and reality of the reader had an irresistible effect upon George. He scarcely knew why, but his thoughts went back to very early days, and visions of his fair mother rose before him.

When Penelope had helped her father and sister to their rooms, she returned to gather up all Amy's little fragments of work and her books, and again George was left alone. He wondered whether he should see any more of Miss Johnstone that night, and looked round the room to find some amusement. One of poor Amy's novels caught his eye, and he made himself comfortable in Mr. Johnstone's arm-chair and began to read it. But he could not fix his attention upon the book; his thoughts were with Frieda, wondering what she would do next, and half repenting that he had come to Valehead. And yet he knew that the money had melted very rapidly, and that, in spite of his grand declaration to Frieda, the fifty pounds were nearly exhausted.

'Something will turn up,' he was saying to himself; 'anyhow, I am well out of the pork-butchering and salt-beef trade. If I can get the money, I will go back to old Dr. Forrest and pay him for my living. I could have a jolly time of it with him, for he would not pry into my concerns.'

George's meditations were broken in upon by Pennella. She came to clear up the room, as was

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her nightly custom; see that the fire was nearly out, and arrange everything for the morning's dusting, so that her maid might have as little extra work as possible.

'We go to bed early here,' she said to George, 'and after your journey you will be glad to do so, perhaps.'

'Thanks,' said George, rising. 'Good-night, then.'

'You will find the gas lighted in your room. I hope it will be comfortable. To-morrow I shall talk to you about your plans. My father and Amy do not come down to breakfast. I always have mine at eight, and I hope to see you then, and to hear that you are going back to your friends.'

'You won't hear that,' said George bluntly. 'I don't mean to go back. I am free now.'

'Are you sure you are free?' little Miss Johnstone asked in her bright, quick way. 'Are you sure you are not in bondage? Do not be angry with me; but you ought to give up your own will, and return to the place where God appointed your lot. There is no safety and no happiness for any of us if we rebel against the will of our dear Father in heaven. He lets us have it sometimes, only to find out how bitter it is. It is your duty to go back to Broxholme, and do all in your power to atone for the past.'

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George had risen, and stood with his back leaning against the chimney-piece. Little Miss Johnstone looked *very* little as she stood before him. But she did not flinch from speaking honestly, and the gaze of her clear dark eyes made George turn away his head. He did not feel comfortable under them.

'What is it you really desire to be?' Pennella asked. 'What profession do you wish to follow?'

'The medical profession. I am going to be a doctor.'

'A doctor's life is no sinecure,' Pennella said, 'and you have many years of hard work to go through before you can qualify. What will you live on meanwhile?'

'Oh, I don't know,' George tried to say carelessly. 'I shall get an allowance, I dare say. I have some property coming in when I am of age.'

The property was very small, but George tried to look at it through a magnifying-glass.

'Well,' little Miss Johnstone said, 'for your sister's sake, as well as your own, I again strongly advise you to return to your kind friends. You are, it seems to me, throwing away the good things God has given you for nothing. It would be heroic in you to go back to the office and win respect there, and earn a living. But it is—forgive me—cowardly to turn your back on the battle-field because you do not like the service.'

'You don't understand,' George said. 'I am

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well connected; and if my father and mother had lived, I should have been educated as gentlemen's sons are educated. It is not likely that I can submit to descend to a vulgar trade if I can help it. You cannot understand.'

'Yes, I do,' said Pennella brightly; 'I understand it all perfectly; and I think that no trade or calling is beneath a real Christian gentleman. His work, if done from the heart, makes the service noble. But good-night now. We ought to be asleep by this time.'

George tried to bow stiffly, and pretend not to see Miss Johnstone's hand, but it would not do. She laid it on his arm, and said:

'Don't be angry with me, and let me know that you have made up your mind to-morrow to go home. Good-night.'

Frieda was in great anxiety lest her brother's arrival should be discovered. At first she thought she would confide in Mrs. Willoughby and David, but then she decided it would be safer not to do so. She went over to Heathfield the next morning to say 'Good-bye,' and Mrs. Willoughby was heartily glad to find she was going to Broxholme.

'It is the kindest and best thing you can do,' Mrs. Willoughby said.

'I am sorry to leave Cosy's picture unfinished, but I shall pay a very short visit.'

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'I wish you could be back in time for our concert,' Cara said. 'It will be very flat without you.'

Frieda's eyes glistened. She liked to know that she was wanted, and especially by Cara, for whom she had a great respect, though none of the girl-like devotion and friendship which might have been natural under the circumstances. Cara was so downright and practical, so altogether above, as it seemed to Frieda, her hopes and fears, her weaknesses and vain longings, that she did not feel drawn to her as to the loving, sympathetic heart of the mother of the octave.

Cara had a certain hardness of judgment which is common enough in characters like hers, and she could express herself with a force which was not always agreeable. Her mother's gentleness and tenderness softened her by influence, and she could *feel* without words when her mother was pained by anything she said of others.

'We shall miss you very much,' Cara repeated. 'I have some trouble with Maude; she is so vain, and so anxious to put herself forward in our little performance, and I am equally determined to repress her. She is a pretty little creature, but more unblushingly conceited than anyone I ever knew.'

'Cara, that is a strong opinion,' said Mrs. Willoughby.

'I dare say it is, mother, but it is true neverthe-

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less. David thinks exactly the same as I do, only he won't say so.'

'I must go now,' Frieda said; 'the fly will be coming round;' and, as she spoke, wheels were heard, and the fly was seen stopping at the gate of Heathfield.

Mrs. Willoughby's parting kiss was a very long one, and a whispered 'God bless you, and direct you aright, dear child,' made Frieda say to herself, 'I wonder if she knows George is here.'

She was leaving St. Winifred's, when David came down the steps. From the window at the side of the house he had seen Frieda come out the evening before with a tall figure of a young man. He had no doubt in his own mind that it was George, but it was not for him to force Frieda's confidence.

'I am going to Broxholme,' she said hurriedly. 'Maude wishes to take my part in the reading. I shall not be here on Tuesday.'

'I am very sorry,' David said. 'I don't know how we shall get on without you.'

'Oh! better than with me,' she said lightly. 'Good-bye.'

As the fly was driving off, one of the Valehead college boys came up to David.

'Who is that girl in the fly with the luggage?' he asked. 'I saw her last evening in Whitelands, walking with a tall fellow, and talking so earnestly to him. Is anything up?'

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'I don't know,' said David: 'what do you mean by asking if anything is up? The young lady is Miss Burnley.'

'Lady Katherine Burnley's daughter! Why, I thought she was a pretty girl, with a lot of fair hair.'

'So she is; and here she comes. The young lady in the fly was Miss Frieda Burnley, her cousin. I will introduce you to Maude.'

'Oh!' Maude said breathlessly, 'I want your brother Fraser to come and practise on our piano. Mother is not downstairs yet, and we can have a good practice, for our piano in the drawing-room seems to suit the violin.'

'Better than our tea-kettle in the play-room,' David said. 'Let me introduce Mr. Collingwood to you, Miss Maude Burnley.'

Maude smiled graciously, and showed her pearly teeth to their full extent.

'You are coming to our concert,' she said; 'it's for *charitable* purposes, and is to be a grand success.' Then, with a few more pretty little rippling nothings, about the decoration of the room, the price of the tickets, and the rehearsal that evening, Maude tripped away.

'She is very pretty,' said David's friend, 'and she knows it. Come for a walk, will you?'

The two boys walked away together over the Downs, and were soon in earnest conversation about their future. Arthur Collingwood was in the same

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form with David, and sympathy in persistence in work, though for different ends, drew them together. Collingwood was to 'coach' for the army, and could not understand David's preference for a different life.

'As you have a father in the service,' Collingwood was saying, 'I can't imagine why you don't go in for it. You would pass head of the list, as certainly as I shall come out very near the bottom.'

'I am going to have a shot at the Balliol in the autumn,' David said, 'and amongst my five younger brothers there are safe to be one or two soldiers.'

The Downs reached to the very edge of a steep precipice, where the limestone rocks raised an almost perpendicular wall from the bed of the river below. A sloping plateau of turf lay on the other side of the light iron railing on a low stone wall, which was raised as a protection, and ran along the edge of the rock for nearly a mile. This spot was a favourite resort of Valehead people, and was known as St. Benedict's Rock. Tradition stated that in a cave half-way down the face of the steep wall a hermit had formerly lived, his food let down to him by means of baskets; and that there he lived for many years, and died in the odour of sanctity. He said masses, and rang a tinkling bell, which called the faithful to worship, some forty feet above his

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head; and he would place in the empty baskets handkerchiefs which had been let down to him to bless, for the cure of sickness and disease.

St. Benedict's cavern had a very narrow ledge of rock in front of it; and the legend of the place was, that his figure was still at intervals to be seen standing there, with uplifted hands, as if in blessing, when the ships sailed out beneath him for the Channel. If St. Benedict appeared, the sailors said they were certain to have no storms and no shipwreck, and many an eye was turned up to the cave as the vessels from many countries sailed in and out from the harbour and the Channel.

The two boys stood for some minutes leaning over the iron railing. It was a bright January day, and the tide was high. On the other side of the river wooded heights rose, fringed at the summit by larches and pines, which stood out distinctly traced against the pale blue sky. There were a good many people walking and driving round St. Benedict's wall on this fine morning; and David, at a sign from his friend, looked round and saw George Burnley standing near him.

'It's the fellow I saw that girl walking with last evening.'

'Yes; it's her brother,' David said coolly; 'at least, I think so,' he added.

They turned to walk round the path which skirted the wall, and on their return the boy, who had like

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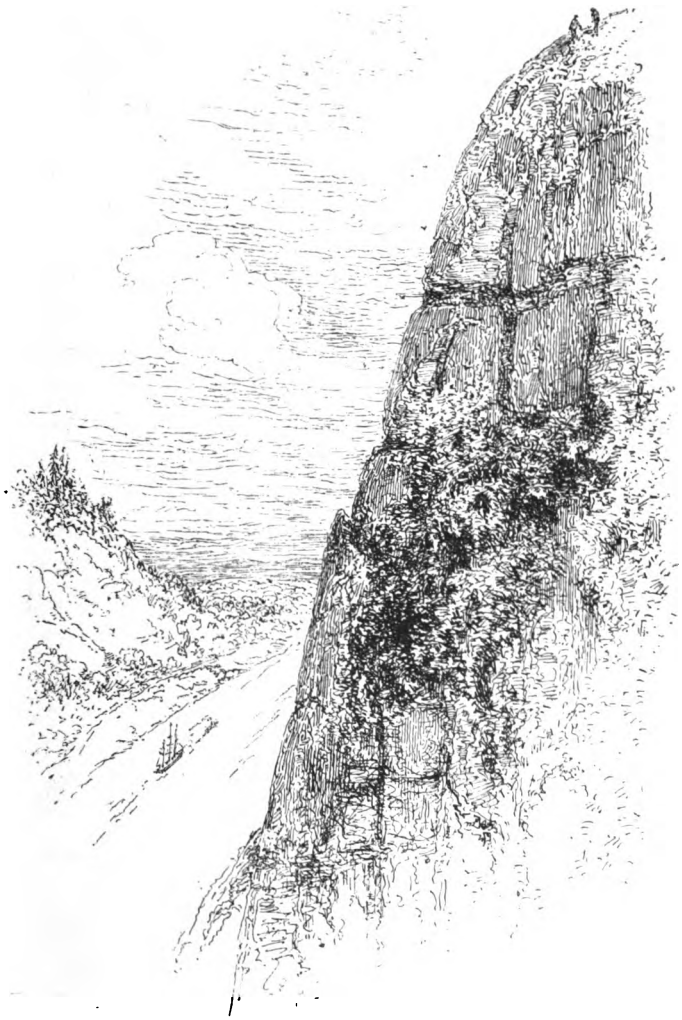

ST. BENEDICT'S ROCK.

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themselves been leaning against the railing, had vanished. As David and Arthur Collingwood were passing, they heard a shout, and then something more like a cry than a shout.

'There is some one in trouble,' David said, leaping over the low railing.

'Take care, Willoughby! look out!—the rock goes straight down to Benedict's cave. There is no room for a cat to stand on the next ridge.'

But as the cries increased, and grew more like an entreaty for help, David threw himself upon his face, and crept near the edge of the grass plateau. Looking down, at a distance of some forty feet below him, he saw a figure crouched up on the narrow ledge of rock before St. Benedict's cavern.

'Hallo!' he said; 'keep still.'

'I shall go over—I can't keep still.'

'Yes, you can, if you try,' David said, with a tone of authority. 'Push yourself back in the opening behind.'

'I can't—I can't! Oh, I must go over.'

Meantime a little knot of people had collected by the wall, and Arthur Collingwood had leaped over it.

'I say, Willoughby, you can't do anything—we must get help. Who is it?'

'It is Frieda Burnley's brother, I believe. I think I can let myself down to him.'

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'Impossible, Willoughby!—you will be dashed to pieces.'

'I can't see *him* dashed to pieces,' was the reply. 'If I had a rope, I know I could reach him; how to drag him up is another matter. He has moved back a little!' he exclaimed.

'I can't get in!' the voice shouted; 'the hole is all grown over. Oh! pray, pray help me!'

The despairing cry was almost that of agony. George Burnley was hanging face to face with death, and what were all his schemes and plans now? Where were all his notions of his own position, and the dignity necessary to maintain it? He was suddenly brought into close contact with the great reality of what seemed certain death, and his soul fainted within him.

'Listen to what I say,' David shouted in his clear, ringing tones. 'Hold on to the bushes, keep your eyes shut, and pray to God to save you. I will come to you with a rope. Send for ropes, Collingwood,' he called; 'and don't come and risk *your* life, too, for nothing.'

'The two men who were working at the road have gone for ropes. They say they can get them at that large house close by. But, Willoughby, you must not go down—the men will do it. One of them has worked in the quarries, and is the right fellow to employ—Willoughby!'

But David said no more—he lay in the same

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position, with his eyes fixed on the figure which was below him. The jackdaws that made their nests in the fissures of the rock flew in and out with a faint caw. The voices of the ever-increasing crowd at the wall sounded in his ears like a confused murmur. He would not move, or turn, or give up his watch over the boy below him. His brave heart did not flinch, nor a whit of his resolution falter.

'It is right to do all I can,' he said to himself—not to Collingwood, who stood behind him, answering from time to time a number of foolish, irrelevant questions from the spectators.

'How did he get down?—did he fall or slip?' asked one.

'Did he do it on purpose?' asked another. 'One does hear of such fearful things in these days.'

A chair-man, who had dragged a lady to St. Benedict's wall for her morning airing, now spoke:

'I saw him get over and walk along the grass where that young gent is lying. Unless you know the place, it is very deceiving. But he must have gone round by that little path where the ground has fallen away of late years, and then slipped. I should *say*, though I did not see, that the young gent got scared, and, in clambering back, slipped over. It's a miracle he was caught on the ledge, that it is. But it is a place for miracles,' and the man laughed.

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Meanwhile, the minutes seemed hours to Collingwood, as he kept guard over his friend. Presently he heard him speak.

'Collingwood, you know I may fall. I may go over if I reach the ledge. I wish you would tell my mother, with my love, that it is all right with me—she will know what you mean—and that I *felt* a strong Arm round me, Collingwood.'

'Yes,' said the boy, in a husky voice.

'And tell Frieda Burnley I did my best to save her brother. She loves him so much—mind you tell her—and——'

And now there was an excitement in the crowd of spectators. The men had returned with the ropes, and had been joined by two more stout fellows, who were to hold fast on the ropes after they had been made tight round David. When he heard the help had come, he raised himself from his position, first calling out in a cheery voice:

'I shall be with you now directly. Hold fast, and don't move. Keep your wits about you.'

'Oh! I dare not move. I shall never get up again!' and then a low cry.

'What a craven he is!' Arthur Collingwood murmured. 'Let one of the men go, Willoughby.'

'Oh no; I am much lighter, and I can manage him better. Now, my good fellows, put the ropes round me, and leave my hands free.'

'There are some little ledges, sir; if you turn your

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face to the rock, you can feel 'em with your foot. You must cling on to the two ends of the rope, which me and my mates will hold, and this young gent shall take the end that is tied round your body.'

'Make a loop at one end, and I'll hitch it round his waist; then do you think you can haul us both up together?' David asked.

'Yes, sir, if you are as steady as old Time,' said one of the men.

And now the preparations were all made, and David gently let himself swing over the side of the rock.

'All right!' he cried; 'begin to let me down. All right. Hold fast the centre rope, Collingwood, and all will be well.'

And David's face, as it disappeared below the level of the place where the men and Arthur Collingwood stood, with the ropes made fast to the iron railings behind, was all aglow with courage and faith.

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CHAPTER XVI.

SAVED.

'THIS fine morning must be taken advantage of,' Mrs. Willoughby said to Cara. 'I think I should like a walk over to St. Benedict's wall. Shall we take Cosy and Andrew and Bernard?'

Cara was quite willing to do so, for she was rather tired of Maude Burnley's perpetual laughter about nothing, and rather provoked at the sight of Edgar and Gilbert's devotion to her.

'They are often disobliging to me,' she said; 'but they will do anything she tells them, and even Fraser is caught in the same trap. Do you think I ought to leave them alone together in the play-room, for David is gone for a walk with his friend Collingwood?'

'I will give nurse a hint that you and I are both gone out with the children,' Mrs. Willoughby said. 'I think we may safely leave them. Gerard will be coming directly, and Maude said she should have to ride with him at twelve.'

Cosy and the little boys were in the greatest

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delight; a walk with their mother was always a treat.

Mrs. Willoughby enjoyed being with her children, which was the secret of their pleasure in being with her.

I have seen many mothers who give their children the feeling that they are, as they express it, 'herding them.' They do not neglect them; nay, they do their duty faithfully by them; but it is soon detected to be drudgery by the sharp eyes of the little ones. Heart-service here, as in everything else, tells. Mrs. Willoughby lived in her children's hopes and fears, joys and pleasures. These were *hers* because they were *theirs;* and when in unrestrained intercourse, as now, they skimmed the turf on the Downs, Mrs. Willoughby was as merry and happy as they were. It was Cara who called Andrew to order for sliding down one of the little sloping undulations made by dips in the rock, and leaving green marks on his blue serge knickerbockers. It was Cara who insisted on Bernard keeping his hat on his head, rather than encourage it to fly off that he might race after it. Cara was more the 'Mentor' of the younger children in things pertaining to dress and behaviour than their mother.

'There goes poor Mrs. Willoughby,' Lady Katherine sighed out to Thompson, as she settled herself to her morning papers in her comfortable chair. 'Poor thing! what it *must* be to be the slave of all those children!'

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'Indeed, my lady, I think Mrs. Willoughby is one of the brightest and youngest-looking ladies I ever saw. Her step is as light as a girl's, and I am sure anyone would say she and Miss Willoughby were sisters.'

'Dear me! do you think so? I think Mrs. Willoughby looks *quite* her age,' Lady Katherine said; 'and she has no figure. Did Miss Frieda leave anything behind her, Thompson?'

'No, my lady.'

'She was ready, I hope, when the fly came round. I bid her "Good-bye" last night. I hope Henry went to the station with her.'

'Oh yes, my lady; and Master Gerard, when he heard Miss Frieda was going alone, raced after the fly, and I dare say overtook it.'

Thompson waited a moment after this piece of information; but Lady Katherine made no response to it, and only said:

'If Miss Maude is still at St. Winifred's, I wish you to go over, Thompson, and say I desire her to come home. She really must not spend all her holidays with the Willoughbys. It won't do at all. Give me the eau-de-Cologne before you go, Thompson.'

Thompson obeyed, and departed with her message to Miss Maude, with the fullest certainty that Miss Maude would take no heed of the order for her return. Thompson was saved the necessity by

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meeting Gerard at the gate. He had seen Frieda off, and was not at all unwilling to cross over to St. Winifred's and fetch Maude, or, rather, let her know her mother's wishes that she should return at once.

As Mrs. Willoughby and her children drew near to St. Benedict's wall, little Bernard said:

'There are such a lot of people by the wall, mother; perhaps they are waiting to see a polo-match.'

'They would not wait there,' Cara said, 'to see polo; and, besides, this is not the time of year for polo.'

Several people had separated themselves from the little crowd, and Cara, going up to an old gentleman who was walking quickly away, said:

'Can you tell us why there are so many people collected by St. Benedict's wall?'

'A young man has been let down by ropes to try to rescue another who has fallen as far as the cave. I cannot wait to watch any longer. It will be the loss of two lives instead of one.'

'What is it, Cara?' Mrs. Willoughby said. 'What does he say?'

'A young man has fallen over the rock, and another is trying to save him. Had we not better turn back?'

What was it that seemed to impel Mrs. Willoughby to say:

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'Let us go on; we need not look at anything dreadful; but we may be of use—who can tell? Yes, may go back with the children, and let me go on—or wait here.'

Mrs. Willoughby gave Cosy into Cara's keeping, and went quickly towards the edge of the crowd.

It was a silent crowd now; not a word was spoken; and Mrs. Willoughby pressed through to the front, with a strange thrill of foreboding she could not have put into words.

There were the men and the ropes, and there, with a white set face, was Collingwood holding with a desperate grip the loop of a rope. The men in their rough clothes were managing the other ropes, and two had crept on hands and knees to the very edge, and, looking over, were to give the word when the ropes should be drawn up with the weight of the rescued ones at the end.

'Mr. Collingwood,' Mrs. Willoughby said; but her voice was low, and it did not reach him, or, if it did, he would not turn his head or speak.

The silence of the watchers was unbroken; now and then there was a word or two from the men who were looking over, but it was scarcely intelligible.

'He must be in a faint,' one said; 'he can't help himself a bit.'

'He'll never do it, at this rate. He'll be over the ledge in a minute.'

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Stout-hearted as the men were, and well used to sights of peril, they were seen to turn their heads aside for a moment — the critical moment. For, standing on the narrow perilous ridge was David Willoughby, vainly endeavouring to get the rope made fast round George Burnley's waist.

And when that was done, the least movement too much backwards or forwards, and they would be hanging together over some two hundred feet of precipitous rock below. The least unguarded movement, and George would slip over and be dashed to pieces.

His fall, so far, had been broken by the masses of ivy which hung down over the cave, and he had been partially caught by the growth of shrub at the cave's mouth. He was terrified and stupefied, but not hurt, as far as his noble deliverer could see.

'Help yourself by raising your arms, or I shall never get the rope round you,' David said. 'Rouse yourself: it is life or death for both of us!'

But George only replied by piteous moans of terror-stricken agony. He was so much larger and stouter in build than David, that the task was a most difficult one. It was just as he had lifted George's arms and slipped the noose under them, that the men turned away their heads.

If George struggled or resisted, it was all over; and David knew it.

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There was in the boy's heart a sense of the great peril; but there was the sense, too, of the Hand that was over him.

The lion-heart within him, the soldier's heart of which his brave father had spoken, beat high with noble courage. The rope was adjusted, then David put his arm round George's shoulders, and with one hand held the rope.

'Take the other end,' he said in a loud voice, 'and hold on.'

But George was limp with fear, and he could not grasp it.

'Then I must take both ends,' he said. And, passing his arm round George's neck, he succeeded in taking firm hold of the rope with that hand also. One upward glance, one word of prayer, and David shouted: 'Haul up now—ready!'

Instantly the word was given, 'Hold hard behind; they are coming!' And the men began to tighten the ropes, and slowly and with difficulty the burden was raised.

Moments of terrible suspense passed.

Mrs. Willoughby, ever since she had seen Collingwood, had felt a strange sense of dread at her heart.

She could not have uttered the words, but 'Can it be David? What if it is David?' rose to her lips.

He had gone out with Collingwood; had not Cara said so? And there stood Collingwood with the

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rope in his grasp, holding it as for dear life, but never uttering a word.

The silence was broken by a cry of, 'Steady there! steady!' Then another pause; and then a dark object was seen slowly rising above the edge of the precipice.

'Hold hard! help behind there!' the men shouted, and Collingwood was joined by several of the spectators.

'Steady there! steady! Don't jerk them; they can't help themselves!' And at last the two figures were laid upon the turf, the ropes cut, and George Burnley sat upright. The men took him up in their arms, and put him over the railings on safe ground; but it was Collingwood who raised the other insensible form, and cried out: 'There is something wrong with him; help him—the rope has throttled him!'

The men took a clasp-knife, and cut the rope, but David did not revive.

Then the spectators gave way, as a cry was heard of 'David, David!—my son, my son!' And some one whispered, 'It is his *mother;*' while an old man, who stood nearest her, said:

'You may be proud of your son, madam; he is one of God's heroes.'

At this moment a brougham which was passing was hailed, and one of the Valehead doctors leaped out and was soon bending over the motionless figure lying on the turf.

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A thrill of deep sympathy ran through the crowd as Mrs. Willoughby, calm now and self-possessed, said to the doctor:

'Can we take him home?'

But the doctor did not speak. His hand was on David's heart, and his keen professional eyes closely scanning the upturned face.

'Lift him into my carriage,' the doctor said; 'and you can get in also, madam,' addressing Mrs. Willoughby. 'Where shall I order my coachman to drive?'

'To St. Winifred's, Downside Park,' was the reply

Even in this supreme moment, Mrs. Willoughby did not forget others.

'All who have helped my son in his efforts to rescue another boy, I hope will come to my house this afternoon. Mr. Collingwood, will you see to this for me, and tell them all how I thank them? And the boy David saved, will you look after him?'

Arthur Collingwood promised; and as the carriage drove away, he buried his face in his hands. The last glimpse of that white, still face was too much for him, and overwrought and overcome with the long strain on him, he burst into tears.

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CHAPTER XVII.

BROXHOLME.

FRIEDA had a quick, uneventful journey to Broxholme. Mr. Hunter was waiting on the platform to meet her, and discovered her in the noisy bustling throng before she saw him.

'Here! my dear. What did you come third-class for? That's a pity! I'd have paid your fare. How much luggage? Only that box and these little matters,' taking the neat roll of rugs and cloak and the travelling-bag from her hand. 'Aunt is reckoning on seeing you, but she feels a bit nervous about it. Have you found the boy?'

'Yes,' Frieda said. 'He is in Valehead; he came there yesterday.'

'That's well. I bear him no ill-will, and I am ready to let bygones be bygones; and as to aunt, she was fit to rush off the minute she heard you had news of George, and cross you on the journey, and bring him back if you have found him.'

Frieda did not like to say what she knew to be

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true, that George had no desire to return to his uncle's house—indeed, had openly declared his intention of never doing so if he could help it.

They were in a rumbling fly by this time, and winding in and out the busy streets of Broxholme, for it was market-day. The fine old church stood in a square, with picturesque red-brick houses round it; and, as they passed it, Frieda noticed a board over one of the houses—a semicircular board, on which was printed in gold letters, 'Academy for Young Gentlemen.' No doubt that was George's school; and though the blinds were drawn down, and the house looked asleep—as the Christmas holidays were not yet over—Frieda could picture to herself the crew of rough boys who disported themselves in the playground at the side of the house, where cross-poles and ropes with rings at the ends dangled forlornly in the air.

'There's Mr. Bigsby's house and the school,' Mr. Hunter said. 'Perhaps we may see the boy back again, after all.'

Frieda could only echo, 'Perhaps.' She felt so sure in her own mind that her brother had done with Broxholme and Mr. Bigsby, and would never return.

At last the fly turned in to the Avenue, and Mr. Hunter exclaimed:

'Here we are! It's a nice private sort of place, and very quiet. There's no traffic except up to

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the houses. I often say one might be in the country.'

The aspect of the Avenue was not so attractive in Frieda's eyes as her uncle seemed to take for granted it would be.

'We don't live amongst the shops, you see. There's a doctor next door; and Mr. Harper, the corn-merchant, lives at the end house—he drives his one-horse carriage. There's Phœbe on the watch, and aunt peeping over the blind,' he said, as the wheels of the fly grated against the pavement before the house; and Phœbe came tripping down the steps, with a smile of welcome on her pleasant face.

Mrs. Hunter was just behind her; and Mr. Hunter calling out, 'Run in, my dear, run in: I'll pay the coachman,' Frieda obeyed. Mrs. Hunter extended both hands to her, saying:

'I am glad to see you, my dear; and George—you say you have news of him!'

'Yes; I left him at Valehead,' Frieda said.

'Oh, I thank God that he is safe!' poor Mrs. Hunter exclaimed, bursting into tears. 'I have suffered so much from not knowing where he was. It has been the uncertainty which has tried me more than anything. Suspense is so hard to bear.'

'Indeed it is,' Frieda said, looking at her new-found relation with surprise: she was so very different from what she had expected to find her —so refined in her features, and her voice so gentle.

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'You have been very kind about George,' Frieda said. 'I can never forget it.'

'My dear,' said Mrs. Hunter, 'it can't be called kindness, for I love that boy as my own. And you love him dearly, I know.'

'Yes; I have felt as if I would do anything for him,' Frieda said; 'but my love has not been wise, I am afraid. I shall always think I am to blame for much that has happened.'

'I can't allow that,' Mrs. Hunter said. 'Now come upstairs and see your room, and then we will have dinner. I dare say uncle has gone back to business. He is very much engaged at this time of year.'

Frieda found a large fire to welcome her in the 'best bedroom,' which was the pride of Mrs. Hunter's heart, with its massive four-post bed with crimson damask hangings, and a highly polished mahogany wardrobe and washing-stand, and long pier-glass. The floor was covered with a good Brussels carpet, and everything as clean as Phœbe and her mistress could make it. It was a great contrast to Frieda's attic in Downside Park, and there was an air of comfort about the house which struck her forcibly.

Mrs. Hunter left her for a few minutes to attend to something in the kitchen, and then returned to take her downstairs.

'This is his room,' Mrs. Hunter said, 'next to

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ours,' opening a door at the end of the passage. 'I keep it just as he left it, and a fire is lighted every two or three days that it may be aired when he comes home.'

Frieda looked round in surprise. George's room was infinitely more comfortable than Gerard's at Heathfield. There were all his school-books on their shelves, his fishing-rods, his cricket-bat, and a large ship perfectly rigged with all sails set, with many other things in which boys delight.

Frieda became conscious of a sudden change in her feelings. It had been the cry of her heart hitherto, 'How could George stay with people like the Hunters?' Now she exclaimed, turning to Mrs. Hunter:

'I cannot think how he could leave this comfortable home.'

'Ah! my dear, I have asked myself that question a hundred times; but, you know, we are homely people, and, as I say often to my husband, "We ought to have done differently by George, and remembered that his family was higher than ours." Still, I never, never thought he would have gone away without a word, and——'

Mrs. Hunter paused; but Frieda, clasping her hands, said:

'It was most ungrateful; and when I think of his taking the money, I am ready to sink into the earth with shame.'

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'Ah! my dear,' Mrs. Hunter exclaimed, 'that was a sore thrust, but it is all forgiven now.'

'It is not forgotten,' Frieda said, 'by me. I have brought some money with me, which I beg you will take, and repay the debt. I have been working for George for a long time, and now you must have it, please.'

Frieda drew from her pocket her purse, where the bank-notes were lying wrapped in paper.

But Mrs. Hunter put them from her.

'My dear, I could not touch your money, and I am certain uncle won't. We must consult what it is best to do about George this evening, and I know if you offer this to him he will say what I say; he would not take it on any account.'

The mid-day dinner passed over silently. Mr. Hunter never talked while he was eating. He made dinner a business; and his nap afterwards, with a handkerchief thrown over his face, in his armchair, was part of the programme. He snored rather loudly, and Frieda thought it would be a good opportunity to go upstairs and arrange the contents of her box in the neat drawers of the wardrobe.

A large pantry opened from the dining-room, in and out of which Mrs. Hunter flitted with the 'silver,' which Frieda saw her washing in a large wooden bowl, and rubbing with wash-leather.

'I make no company of you, my dear; but there's a fire in the drawing-room, if you would like to sit

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there. You have not spoken to Jip; dear George was so fond of him. Poor old boy, then!' as the dog waddled up to Frieda, and sniffed round her with a low whine. 'He knows his name, I do believe,' Mrs. Hunter said; 'he always whines when I mention him.'

Frieda stooped to pat the dog, and then pursued her way upstairs.

The drawing-room was stiff and bare, the chairs set round an oval table, on which books were laid at regular intervals round a large basket of wax flowers under a glass shade. There were two so-called easy-chairs on either side of the fire, neither of which looked suggestive of repose, while the sofa was so draped with a variety of crochet couvrettes, and stocked with stout cushions worked with beads, that no one could be bold enough to displace them by sitting on it.

'We only use this room when we have company, Mrs. Hunter said, when she joined Frieda; 'but I thought you would not like to sit in the room where we had dined.'

'Oh! please let me sit where you do every day,' Frieda said; 'and when may I talk to Mr. Hunter about George? What does he wish, and what ought to be done?'

'This evening, after tea, will be the time,' Mrs. Hunter said; 'but let us have a talk, dear, about him, and let us be quite free with each other.'

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It may seem strange that so much affection and interest should be lavished by Mrs. Hunter and Frieda on what we are compelled to think was a very unworthy object. There was in George Burnley little that was noble or good; he had not even suffered in any marked way from his ingratitude so far — and suffering often awakes pity, which is quickened into love for the erring and sinful ones. George's selfish nature seemed untouched by a spark of grateful affection; and yet he was dearly loved by the tender woman who had taken him to her heart when he was homeless and friendless; and he had been the chief object of devotion to his sister, who was even now ready to make any sacrifice for his good.

Such things are not uncommon, and again and again we see that love does not depend on the worthiness of the one beloved. People like Mrs. Hunter often manifest a double share of affection for those on whom the world looks coldly, and judges perhaps deservedly with hard judgment.

The subject was discussed that evening after tea, in the warm, cosy dining-room; Frieda, seated on a low footstool covered with a pattern of needlework in many-coloured squares—the only fancy-work in which Mrs. Hunter ever indulged—and Mr. and Mrs. Hunter on either side of the fire.

Mr. Hunter liked to watch Frieda — the grace of every movement, the turn of her slender throat,

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the expressive gestures of her white hands. Mr. Hunter's thoughts went back to the far past, and the sister of his youthful days seemed to come back and rise before him.

'Well, my dear,' he began, 'now about George. What do you wish me to do? I am ready, if the young fellow would like to be apprenticed to a doctor. I will pay the premium, and he can come here and settle matters. You had better drop him a line to-morrow and say so.'

'You are too kind and forgiving,' Frieda began. 'I can't hide from myself that George has behaved very badly, and I think he ought to be made to feel it. I know my friend Miss Johnstone, where I left him last evening, will speak honestly to him, and not flatter him. He ought to hear the truth, and he ought to be made ashamed of his conduct.'

'Ah, my dear, we can't *make* people see their faults. Somehow, what is plain as plain can be to others is hidden from them. It is the old story—

> '"Oh that some power the gift would gie us
> To see ourselves as others see us!"

We are all alike. And look here,' Mr. Hunter said, raising himself from his comfortable position, and slapping his knee vigorously, 'I don't say I made no mistake with the boy. Ellen there thinks I did, and so I'll meet him half-way; and if he will accept my terms, I will speak to Mr. Green here, and see if he will take him into the surgery. If the boy thinks it

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more aristocratic to mix physic and roll pills than keep account of freight, and see that the ledger balances—well, all I can say is, tastes differ. What do *you* say, my dear?' he went on; 'will you come and live with us, and make your home here, till some fine gentleman comes and carries you off?'

'That's what *I* should like,' said poor Mrs. Hunter; 'only, after living with titled people, I am afraid you could not come down to live with us.'

'Thank you very much,' Frieda said, 'but I must go on with my painting, and do all I can to succeed with it. I attend the Art School at Valehead sometimes, and there is a shop there where my pictures are sold. But it would be very nice here, and you are so kind,' she said, laying her hand caressingly on Mrs. Hunter's as she had never done on Lady Katherine's.

'Will you drop a line as I tell you to the young fellow, and bid him answer by return?' and here Mr. Hunter began to feel sleepy; he took the *Times*, and began to read, but very soon he let the paper fall from his hand, and was fast asleep.

'He gets tired after a hard day's work,' his wife said by way of apology; 'he is not so young as he was; and he had often said, when George grew up, he would take his place in the counting-house, and he would rest.'

And then Mrs. Hunter went back to the stories of George's childhood and boyhood—his illness when he caught scarlet fever of the most malignant type,

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dwelling on all the details as a mother might do; and Frieda, to whom such details would once have been so precious, listened with a weight at her heart, and all she heard only tended to make her feel more bitterly the ingratitude of which her brother had been guilty, and reproach herself for having fostered in him the silly notions of pride, which had worked so much mischief.

Long did Frieda lie awake that night, thinking over all her perplexities, and wondering if, after all, she might not do worse than accept Mr. Hunter's offer, and make her home in her uncle's house.

Something held her back from doing this. She was vexed to feel disinclination to spend every evening like the one that had just passed. Then visions of the Willoughbys came before her in their bright, active, cheerful home-life, and amongst them all David's figure rose—his earnest eyes, his expressive face, his loyal true-hearted devotion to his mother, his honesty of word and deed. If only George could be brought under his influence—see what a boy, scarcely older than he was, could be in his home—if only she could bring about a meeting! As Frieda thus hoped and feared, the meeting she desired had been brought about, and in a manner she little dreamed of.

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CHAPTER XVIII.

THE MEETING.

GEORGE BURNLEY had staggered a few paces towards Valehead, and then stopped to lean against the railings which ran along the edge of the Downs. He was bewildered and frightened, but not hurt. As he stood looking back on the dispersing crowd, Collingwood's gesture of distress as the brougham drove off made him draw nearer to him. 'Is he hurt?' he asked.

'Hurt! I think he is dead,' said Collingwood sharply.

'Who is he?' George Burnley said, after a pause.

'It is Willoughby, one of the finest fellows that ever lived.'

'David Willoughby? Frieda, my sister, knows him. You don't really think he is dead?'

'I can't say. If it *is* so, he saved your life at the expense of his own.'

Collingwood turned away, and George Burnley went off in an opposite direction. He was conscious

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of having cried and screamed with terror in anything but a manly way, and he was conscious, too, of a certain sharp contemptuous tone in Collingwood's voice —'If it *is* so, he saved *your* life at the expense of his own.'

'I hope he is not dead, though,' George said to himself. 'Frieda has often mentioned him in her letters. She liked him awfully—always held him up as a pattern. I wish I had never come near the place—I had better have stayed in London. I shall just go back to these people, and pack up my traps and be off.'

As George followed the path at the edge of the Downs, which turned abruptly round a deep gorge, he saw the steep face of the rock, and the dark place which showed where St. Benedict's cave hung over the sheer precipice below. What if he had gone over? What if that ringing voice had not called to him, 'I am coming'? What if that brave, steady arm had not reached him, as he hung in peril of death? Why, he must have gone over, and been dashed to pieces. He shuddered at the thought, and could scarcely walk onwards—his legs shook beneath him. Death!—yes, he had been very near death, and the thought filled him with horror. There never was a coward who did not fear death, and such a death as that which he had escaped was too horrible to contemplate. Was David Willoughby, he wondered, afraid of dying? There was no sound

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of fear in his voice, and the glimpse he had of his face as he drew near to deliver him did not tell of terror or distress. Poor George began to doubt himself a little, for the first time in his life, and to feel a little humbled and uneasy. When he reached the Johnstones' house, he met Penelope just coming out. His appearance was somewhat of a relief to little Miss Johnstone. She felt herself responsible for George, and he had disappeared soon after breakfast, and been seen no more, and her work had been a good deal disturbed that morning by wondering what had become of George.

'Have you been a long walk?' she asked. 'We are obliged to be punctual at dinner, but you will find yours is kept hot for you. You look very tired.'

'I am rather done up,' George said; 'I have had an accident—slipped down the rock to a ledge by what they call St. Benedict's cave, and——'

Miss Johnstone turned back with George at once, saying:

'I hope you are not hurt. What a providential escape!—come in and tell me about it.'

She saw he was really overcome, and she put her hand within his arm and led him into the house. She avoided the sitting-room, and took him upstairs at once, calling to Phœbe to bring a cup of soup which had been kept hot for him.

'Now,' she said, in her bright, decided way, 'drink

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this before we talk of what has happened, and you will feel better.'

'I don't want anything,' George said, rejecting her offer.

'Oh yes, you do—see how your hand trembles! Now, I am going to make you lie down when you have drunk the soup, and cover you with blankets. Your teeth are chattering. Come, you must do as I tell you.'

George Burnley felt he was under the control of a superior strength, and made no further resistance. He was shuddering with fear and cold, and Miss Johnstone asked him no more questions. She went downstairs for some sticks, and had soon lighted a fire and given the room an air of comfort. Then she bent over George, and said:

'I am going out for an hour or two about one of my pictures. When I come back, you will be better able to talk to me.'

'You are very kind,' George faltered; but the effort to speak was too much, and he began to sob and tremble again.

Miss Johnstone laid her hand gently on his forehead, and the very touch had a soothing influence; and then when he was quiet she left him.

After an hour's absence she returned, and having quieted Amy, who was full of curiosity about 'that handsome young man,' and answered her father's

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questions, repeated at least twenty times, she went upstairs to George. He had slept, he said, and felt warmer and better; and then little Miss Johnstone sat down by him, and by degrees the whole story was told.

Never before had George been treated as Pennella treated him. She had a wonderful power of speaking the truth without hurting the feelings of those to whom she spoke. Perhaps it was the sincerity and simplicity of her character that made her words go precisely to the point.

George Burnley saw himself in a new light—his selfishness and foolish pride—his disregard of the feelings of others. It was a proof of the effect which Penelope's words had on him, that he made a voluntary confession to her of the money he had taken as a loan from his uncle's cash-box.

'You must not call it a loan, you know,' Penelope said. 'A loan implies that with consent of another person money changes hands; but your uncle did not consent—he was ignorant of the transaction. It was a theft, not a loan.'

'The money *can* be paid back. My uncle can take it when I am of age. He knows that.'

'Yes, he may know it; but that does not alter your act in the least. If you thought there was no harm in opening the cash-box and taking the money, why did you not ask his leave to do so? No,' Penelope continued, 'it is better to look at what has

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passed honestly, and then there is more hope for the future.'

George was silent for a minute, and then he said:

'I want to know how David Willoughby is. I want to know if he is really so much hurt.'

'I am going to inquire for him,' Miss Johnstone said. 'Will you come with me, or do you feel too tired?'

'I will walk with you,' George said, starting up, 'but I won't go into the house.' Then he hesitated. 'I should not wish any of the Heathfield people to see me. Frieda would not like it. I think, after all, I will stay here.'

'Oh yes; do come, unless you are really too tired and shaken. Perhaps you had better lie down again, and I will go to Downside Park and inquire for David Willoughby.'

George, who had sunk back upon the bed, exclaimed:

'Thank you; and will you tell him how grateful I am to him for what he did? I never thanked him, I could not; and then——' George stopped, for he recalled Collingwood's words: 'If he is dead, he will have saved *your* life at the expense of his own.'

'I hope I shall bring you good news,' Penelope said, as she left the room. 'I shall be back as quickly as possible, and then you must come down to tea, and I hope you will feel better.'

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That bright winter's day had passed heavily and slowly at St. Winifred's. David had recovered consciousness; but he had received a very severe strain in the muscles of his neck, and every movement was pain.

The doctor had proved most kind and skilful, and had carried him into the drawing-room, where he was lying on the sofa, as the twilight deepened and the lights began to twinkle like stars along the edge of the Downs.

The boys were all in the lower room, and Cara had taken Cosy over to Heathfield, where Lady Katherine had received them with much graciousness, and had expressed the greatest sympathy with Mrs. Willoughby.

She was sitting by the boy's side, as he lay quite still, hardly able to take her eyes from the face so infinitely dear to her. There was a strange mixture of pride and sorrow in her mother's heart—a thrill of thankfulness that this noble boy was *hers*, and yet a continual throb of pain that he should have suffered and must suffer for a long time.

The doctor was to return at seven o'clock, and bring with him another surgeon, to decide what course it was best to pursue.

'Please let me lie still,' David had said; and the doctor had consented to let him lie in the same position on the sofa till he came back again.

There had been many inquirers for David hanging

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about the house all the afternoon—Collingwood and many of the day boys at the college who had heard of the accident. Reports had been rapidly spread by the eye-witnesses, and there was an expressed wonder from everyone as to why the boy had disappeared, and why he had not waited to acknowledge the debt of gratitude to his deliverer.

The twilight was deepening, and the shadows from the firelight dancing on the walls of the drawing-room. All was still, the silence scarcely broken except by the low murmur of the boys' voices in the room below, or the footfall of passers-by on the path before the house.

Mrs. Willoughby thought David was asleep; but he suddenly opened his eyes.

'Mother, what time is it?'

'Half-past five, darling.'

'I dread the coming of the doctors; it is awful pain to move. Have you been praying that I may be helped to bear it?'

'Yes, dear David.'

'That's right. Did the doctor tell you what he thought about me?'

'He said the muscles round your neck and at the top of the spine had been wrenched by the great weight and strain put on them.'

'I shall have to lie quiet for a long time, I suppose?'

'Yes, I fear so.' Mrs. Willoughby's voice faltered.

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'Never mind, mother; try not to mind,' he said, looking up at her with the tenderest light of love in his eyes. 'You must help me to bear it, mother. I want to see George Burnley; it was odd he should go off like that.'

'Yes, indeed; most ungrateful and unaccountable.'

'I wonder what Frieda will say. I saw her walking with him last evening, so did Collingwood; but they don't know anything about it here at Heathfield, do they?'

'I think not.'

'Can we find out where he is, mother?'

'I have no clue, dear David; and I do not think I am very anxious to find one.'

'But I am,' he said wearily, closing his eyes.

After a few minutes' silence, Fraser opened the door and came gently into the room.

'Mother, some one wants to see you. Nurse told me to come and tell you.'

'I cannot see anyone, Fraser. Who is it?'

'It is Miss Johnstone, a friend of Frieda Burnley's.'

David heard the name, and opened his eyes again.

'Let her come in, mother. I dare say she will have some news of him—George Burnley; *do* let her come,' he said, with pathetic eagerness.

'Not here, David, surely.'

'Yes, *here*, please, mother; *don't* send her away.'

Mrs. Willoughby saw that to refuse his request

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would do more harm than to grant it; and signing to Fraser to stay with David, she left the room.

Penelope was standing in the hall, and Mrs. Willoughby turned with her into the dining-room, as she said:

'I have come from George Burnley, who was left in my charge by his sister. He is very anxious to know how your son is, and what has been the result of his brave efforts to save him this morning.'

'My son has had a great deal of pain, but we may thank God his life is spared. We are expecting the doctors about six o'clock, and he wishes to see you first.'

'If it will not hurt him, I shall be glad to see him,' Penelope said. 'I feel so grieved for *you*, and yet you must be proud of such a son.'

Mrs. Willoughby laid her hand again on Miss Johnstone.

'Thank you for your sympathy. I have heard Frieda Burnley speak of you, and I think you know where alone help can come in a time like this. David is everything to me, to his brothers and sisters, and to his father. I am dreading what lies before me in witnessing his pain, and in the letter which I must write to his father. Indeed, I may have to telegraph; it all depends on what the doctors say after the second examination. But come to him now.'

'Is that Miss Johnstone?' David asked, as he

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heard footsteps. 'I can't turn my head,' he said, 'or hold out my hand, for it hurts me to do either. Miss Johnstone, come here, please. Tell me about Burnley—George Burnley.'

'He was not hurt, but shaken with the fall, and the fear, I think. I have come at his desire to tell you how grateful he is to you for your courage and determination, which, under God, saved his life.'

'It was nothing; I do not see how anyone could do less; but I want you, please, to tell George Burnley that I should like to speak to him alone to-morrow, if I am—well, if the doctors will let me. Tell him I hope he will give the life God has spared to Him, and show he means to do it by going back to that place where his relations live. And would you mind writing to Miss Burnley and telling her I am very glad I saved George?—by God's help,' he added faintly.

The exertion of speaking was clearly very great, and David relapsed again into silence, closing his eyes. A quick, short sob seemed to rouse him.

'Fraser,' he said, 'don't mind about me; it is all right with me; and you can help mother if I never get well again.'

Miss Johnstone was indeed unprepared for calmness and composure like this. 'Mrs. Willoughby is happy,' she thought, 'to be the mother of such a son;' and she left them together as the wheels of a

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carriage were heard stopping at the gate, and the two doctors came up the steep flight of steps.

At the gate she met Cara.

'Miss Willoughby,' she said, 'I have just seen your mother and your brave, noble-hearted brother. I took a message to him from George Burnley, whose life was saved by him this morning.'

'Oh! Miss Johnstone,' Cara said, 'I feel so be wildered that I hardly know what I say; but it does seem to me cruel that David—our David—should suffer, while that unworthy George Burnley should be uninjured; and then to make off as he did, and never, never say one word! David's friend, Collingwood, says he could not have believed it of any boy. It is cruel that David should suffer for *him*.'

'You must not say so,' Miss Johnstone said, with that beautiful light in her eyes which had often struck Frieda. 'Nothing that the God of love allows to happen is cruel; it looks like it, but it cannot be really so. Your brother's noble self-sacrifice will bring in a harvest which we cannot dream of now.'

'I can't bear any words like that now,' said poor Cara; 'if David dies, or is injured for life, I shall never see anything but misery, or feel anything but sorrow. You cannot tell how hard it is.'

'I think I can,' Miss Johnstone said. 'His beautiful face, where patience and unselfishness are shedding a light now, as he lies there, is enough to

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tell me, a stranger, how those who love him must suffer in his suffering. Please believe how sorry I am for you and for your mother.'

'Thank you. I know you are; but I must go into the house now. I may be wanted. I have left little Cosy with Lady Katherine and Maude. I must go and see if I can do anything for mother.'

And now, as they stood in the garden, a cry was heard, as if wrung from the very depths of pain. Only one; but it made Cara run up the steps, and kept Miss Johnstone chained to the spot.

'I must wait till the doctors come out,' she thought. 'I must know how he is.'

Presently Gerard Burnley and Collingwood came up to the gate, and paced up and down the path before the house, also waiting for news.

The stars came out in the dark-blue canopy above, and a moon, nearly at the full, was rising large and red above the trees which skirted the Downs. Boys ran homeward, whistling as they went; now and then a cart passed on the road beyond the strip of turf; and voices were heard, though in the dim light the speakers were invisible. The two boys did not utter a word, and Penelope felt they, too, were waiting for news. It came at last. The doctors walked down the garden, talking to each other in low, earnest tones.

'How is he, sir?' Collingwood asked, springing forward.

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'He is in bed, and tolerably comfortable; nothing but time will effect a cure. Is he your brother, my boy?' the doctor said, putting his hand kindly on Collingwood's shoulder.

'No, sir; but he is my friend.' And Collingwood could say no more, and the doctor went on:

'He is a friend to be proud of; he has had what was near a dislocation of the neck, but we hope he will recover. It is a somewhat unusual injury, but we must hope for the best; his courage and self-possession will help him; he bore the pain which we have been obliged to cause him in a manner truly wonderful.'

'Yes,' echoed the other doctor; 'truly wonderful!' and then both the doctors entered the carriage and drove off.

'Truly wonderful!' Penelope repeated the words, as she walked homewards in the moonlight. 'Yes,' she repeated, 'it *is* wonderful, and "the secret of the Lord is indeed with them that fear Him." That boy has the secret, and he has found the strength which lies in it. What a mother! and what a son! It does me good to see them, and gives me heart to go on, and trust, and not be afraid.' And little Miss Johnstone walked swiftly towards Valehead.

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CHAPTER XIX.

THE WANDERER'S RETURN.

FRIEDA'S letter arrived the next morning, and lay by George's plate when he came down to breakfast. Miss Johnstone watched his face as he read it, but said nothing. She knew when 'silence is golden;' and, as George put the letter in his pocket, she gave him his coffee, and made some remark about her father, who had passed a restless night, and would not come downstairs till dinner-time. Amy's appearance, supported by Phœbe, prevented George from saying anything about Frieda's letter, and he took his breakfast in silence; while Amy was waited upon by her sister, who gave her a round of hot toast and an egg, and met all her grumblings with a cheerful, bright manner.

'The egg was boiled too hard; there was not enough butter on the toast; surely the milk in the coffee had been smoked; and she *did* wish she could have a little cream—if the milk were allowed to stand in the basin, there would be cream!'

It did not strike Amy that her sister ate bread with

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a very scanty scraping of butter, and that her coffee was on this occasion of a very thin quality, that her sister and George might have the full share of the milk. And in none of these little acts of self-denial was there anything of the air of a martyr, or of solemn protest against the selfishness to which she ministered. Penelope Johnstone had that highest grace of *doing*, without any expectation of acknowledgment for the thing *done*, the want of which so often makes the receiver of a kindness wish it had never been conferred.

The next grumble was that the third volume of a book was not come from the library; Penelope had promised to get it the evening before—but 'you never think of me,' was the final wail.

'I am so sorry I failed to get the book, but I had to go to Downside Park on very important business.'

George now rose from the table, and said:

'I think I ought to go there now, for I shall be leaving Valehead to-day.'

'Going away, Mr. Burnley! oh, I am so sorry. I thought you were to stay a week at least,' Amy exclaimed.

'I am going home, thank you,' George said.

Penelope looked at him with a bright smile:

'I am glad to hear you say so; but we shall see you at dinner.'

'Do you think it is too early to go to Downside

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Park?' George asked. 'I shall be glad when it is over; I dread it.'

'You need not dread it,' Penelope said; 'I shall be glad all my life that I saw David Willoughby last evening.'

'You—but that is quite different; I feel as if I could not bear it. You can't know how dreadful it is to think of having caused all this misery. If I had gone over the rocks, no one would have cared about it much.'

'How can you say so, when your sister has made you her first thought for so long, and your kind, mother-like aunt! You must not talk like that; it is wrong and ungrateful.'

But there was deep pity in Penelope's heart for George, as she saw him leave the house with slow reluctant steps, his head bent, and his whole air and bearing so different from the would-be self-satisfied and independent manner of the first evening of his arrival.

David Willoughby had passed a wakeful night; the doctors' orders were strict, that he should keep perfectly still, nor move from the position in which they had placed him the evening before.

The resolution with which he obeyed this order was wonderful. The restraint and weariness were as trying in their way as the actual pain which every movement had caused.

His mother had kept watch by him all through the

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long night. As the hours slowly passed, it seemed to both mother and son as if the early dawn would never break. They were for the most part silent; there was between them the perfect sympathy which has no need of words.

The doctors' visit found David precisely in the position in which they had left him, and they said:

'If you go on like this, the time of enforced quiet will be shortened, my boy.'

'How long will it be?' David asked.

'Oh! we won't measure the time,' said Mr. Green evasively; 'we will take one day as it comes, and hope for the next.'

Mrs. Willoughby followed the doctors from the room, leaving nurse in her place. There are very few amongst us who do not know what it is to brace ourselves to hear the opinion of a doctor in a case of life and death. Mrs. Willoughby sat down and prepared to hear the worst, asking in a low, suppressed tone:

'Is my son's life in danger?'

'We hope not; all depends on perfect rest; and the resolution he has displayed hitherto is the best earnest for the future.'

'Shall I telegraph to his father, or write by the mail?'

The doctors were silent for a moment, and then Mr. Green, who was the spokesman, said:

'A telegram is often a consolation in time of

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trouble; yes, I think you may telegraph, simply that there has been an accident—a serious accident—but hopes are held out of a favourable result.'

'And I think you may add,' said Mr. Matthews, the other doctor, 'that your son's life was risked in a noble effort to save another's. There is a paragraph in the Valehead newspaper to-day, and a letter from an eye-witness, which speaks of your son in glowing terms; you will doubtless read it for yourself.'

Then, with many kindly expressed hopes that Mrs. Willoughby would take a little rest, and divide the nursing with her valuable old servant, the doctors took their leave; Mr. Green saying that he should return at six o'clock, and if there was any accession of pain he should like a message to be sent to his house at three o'clock, and he would come at once.

The doctors were scarcely gone, when the brothers and Cara came in to ask for news. All the boyish faces were grave and sad, while Fraser had great difficulty in repressing his sobs.

'He is no worse,' Mrs. Willoughby said, as the children clustered round her. 'I should like to pray for him, if you will all join with me; and, dear children, let this trouble bind us all more closely to each other. Let us read our usual portion of God's Word together, and then pray for strength to bear this cross which our Father is pleased to lay on us.'

The short service over, Mrs. Willoughby consulted

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with Cara about the telegram to be sent to Allahabad, and wrote a few words herself, in a firm decided hand. Then she asked Edgar to go with it to the office, and said to Gilbert that the little ones would be glad to go out if he would take them.

Lady Katherine had sent Gerard in to say that Cosy would be welcome at Heathfield, and hoped Miss Willoughby would bring her over and spend the day.

The message was brought into the room by Susan, and she added:

'There is a young gentleman waiting to see you at the door, ma'am. He says he is expected.'

'It is poor George Burnley,' Mrs. Willoughby said; 'let me go to him. I know it must be a great effort for him to come.'

'He is an awful sneak,' murmured Edgar; 'I am sure nobody wants him.'

'David wants him,' was the quiet answer, as Mrs. Willoughby left her children and went out to George.

He was standing just within the hall, in a dejected attitude, conscious that the eyes of the young Willoughbys were all upon him, as they watched him from the drawing-room door.

Edgar brushed past him with the telegram form in his hand, without a word. Gilbert gave his shoulders a very perceptible shrug, as Mrs. Willoughby took George into the empty dining-room and closed the door.

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George felt more miserable than he had ever done in his life. The high opinion he had entertained of himself seemed to be crushed out of him, and with his head bent and his hands nervously twisting his hat round and round, he stood before Mrs. Willoughby like a prisoner awaiting his sentence.

To his surprise, she began by saying:

'I hope you were not hurt yesterday; it was a marvellous preservation. David—my son—is very anxious to see you. He is obliged to keep perfectly still, and cannot move in the least.'

George did not speak. He stood in the same attitude, except that his head sank lower and lower on his breast, and Mrs. Willoughby saw that he was on the brink of crying.

Pity for him was for the moment the prominent feeling, and she laid her hand gently on his arm.

'You must not grieve too much,' she said, 'about my son; he will tell you that he feels thankful he saved your life.'

'I wish I had died,' George muttered; 'I was not worth saving, while he——'

'Do not say that,' said Mrs. Willoughby, the tender ring of her sweet maternal voice being very different from Penelope's quick, decided manner of speaking. 'You must not say that, rather think that God has work for you to do for Him, and that He has taught you the value of the life He gave by so nearly taking it from you. Your life was preserved

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for some wise purpose. Now will you come to David?'

George followed Mrs. Willoughby upstairs slowly and reluctantly, and could not utter a word, as the door closed on him and he found himself alone with David; for nurse, at a sign from Mrs. Willoughby, left the room as George entered it.

What passed between the two boys need not be written here. In half an hour's time Mrs. Willoughby, who was beginning to be anxious about the length of the interview, opened the door of David's room, and George Burnley passed her, and going quickly downstairs, left the house without a word.

There was silence in the comfortable dining-room at the Avenue, Broxholme, that evening. Mr. Hunter dozed in his chair over his newspaper; Mrs. Hunter was sitting with a pile of stockings before her, which she was examining for mending; while Frieda was making a sketch of Jip, who lay extended before the fire on the hearth-rug.

Suddenly he pricked up his ears, raised his head, and gave a low whine, and then waddled to the door, sniffing at the threshold.

'Jip, Jip, what is it?' Mrs. Hunter said.

'Why, Jip, you have spoiled my picture. I shall never get you into the same position again.'

As she spoke, a timid, uncertain ring was heard at the hall-door, and after a pause repeated.

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'I wonder who that is,' Mrs. Hunter said. 'Phœbe is a long time going to answer the bell;' and Mrs. Hunter put down her work and went into the hall, just as Phœbe's steps were heard approaching.

'Who is it?' asked Mr. Hunter, raising himself from a nap. 'Where's aunt gone?'

Frieda had not time to reply before poor Mrs. Hunter came back.

'It is George! it is George!' she exclaimed, clasping her hands; 'he won't come in till uncle says he may do so. John, John, go out and tell him he is forgiven.'

In another moment Mr. Hunter had gone into the hall.

'Hallo, George, my boy! come back? That's right; let bygones be bygones—not another word about them. I'm not the man to rake up old grievances.'

Then Mrs. Hunter and Frieda clung to the poor returned wanderer, and did all they could to show he was welcome, while old Jip leaped up at him and licked his hands.

'Have you heard from Miss Johnstone?' George asked. 'Do you know why I am come home?'

'No,' Frieda said; 'what do you mean? Are you ill, George? What has happened?'

'I fell over the rocks yesterday, above St. Benedict's cave, and might have been killed——'

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'George! how did it happen?' Frieda exclaimed. 'I can't understand it. Tell me.'

'I was caught as I fell by the bushes growing over the cave, and lodged on the ledge of rock. It was awful! But oh, Frieda, that is not the worst of it. Your friend, David Willoughby, came down to me with ropes, and—and——'

George buried his face in his hands, while the shuddering terror which he had felt the night before seemed to return, and a nervous trembling seized him.

'George! George!' Frieda exclaimed. 'Tell me, is David Willoughby——'

'He is not dead, but he is awfully hurt; his neck got hitched in the ropes, and he was nearly killed, and all for *me*. All for *you*, too, Frieda,' George went on. 'I saw him to-day, and he told me that I was to come here—come home, and try to show I was sorry; and I *am* sorry,' George said, sobbing hysterically. 'And if I can do any good, it will be all *his* doing. I have promised him to try my best, and I mean to try.' And then poor George laid his head on Mrs. Hunter's breast, and was like a child again, trusting to the surest of all refuges for the sad and erring—a mother's forgiveness and love.

Mr. Hunter left the room to see some one on business, in what he called the 'home office,' and Frieda found herself alone.

It was better to leave George to the loving care of

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his aunt, who had been as a mother to him; and Frieda had a sense of not being wanted, which is always painful. She who had felt so much for her brother, she who had borne so much, and had, as she knew how, encouraged him in his discontent, and fostered his foolish pride, was, after all, not really necessary to him. He had turned to Mrs. Hunter before her, and laid his head on her shoulder for comfort.

It was not exactly jealousy that poor Frieda felt; her idol, as I have said, had fallen on its face, and her gold had become dim; but there was in her heart a weight of disappointment and failure which was hard to bear. While, starting up amidst all this chaos of perplexity and vexation, was David Willoughby's figure, as she had known it, bright, active, full of life and movement, and now lying, perhaps, at the very gates of death.

The postman's loud double-knock was a relief. It was the last delivery, and it brought a letter from Penelope Johnstone, which Phœbe brought in with the tray for supper.

Phœbe did not share her mistress's love for George. She had taken a very different view of his return.

'There's reason in all things,' she said, 'and *I* think when folks have been as "ungrateful as ungrateful can be," they should be made to feel a bit before they are coddled and indulged.'

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Perhaps Phœbe was right. George was treated more like a returning hero than a returning prodigal; and yet his dejection and shattered condition were an excuse for the overflow of Mrs. Hunter's tender affection. But, as Frieda read little Miss Johnstone's account of what had happened, the prominent feeling was admiration for the noble deliverer of her brother, mingled with grief that he should be lying prostrate as Pennella described him. He, the life and soul of that happy household, now lying in a condition which was, looking at the brightest side of the picture, one of considerable anxiety for the present, and, if his life is spared, fear as to complete recovery in the future. All his bright prospects of success shadowed, and his usefulness marred. 'It seems a great mystery,' Pennella said, in conclusion; 'but what is a maze and labyrinth to us, is clear before Him Who holds the clue. So we must not doubt, but trust.'

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CHAPTER XX.

LETTERS.

GEORGE'S nervous system had received what the doctor, who was called in the next day, pronounced 'a severe shock,' and he really seemed physically and morally unable to rouse himself. Mrs. Hunter devised all kinds of dainties to tempt his appetite, and every morning and every evening Mr. Hunter would say:

'Well, George, my boy, how are you? Has not aunt cured you yet?'

Mr. Hunter was a man who disliked discussion about old grievances, and very little was said which in any way referred to the past.

Frieda had completed her portrait of Jip, which gave more pleasure than any picture she had ever painted before, and a massive gold frame was ordered for it at once. Then she made a clever sketch of Mr. Hunter with the newspaper in his armchair, which delighted him, and was exhibited with the greatest pride.

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Thus more than a week passed, and the daily reports of David were almost the same.

Frieda wrote to Cara, and to Maude, and to Penelope Johnstone, and had answers from all three. Cara's was short, but infinitely sad. She never could express herself on paper, and the few words conveyed the utter depression which had fallen upon that once happy household.

The silence of the second note of the Octave had set all the others in a minor key; 'and it seems,' Cara said, 'that no one could ever be happy again till David is well, while every day we ask the question more hopelessly, *Will* he ever be well?'

Maude Burnley's letter, covering three sheets of Lady Katherine's best note-paper, with the address printed in one corner, and the cypher in another, when stripped of all the adjectives, and exaggerations and effusive expressions of sorrow for 'poor David,' certainly told more than Cara's. Irritating as the jumble was, Frieda was thankful for it, and read those three sheets over several times.

'DEAREST DARLING FRIEDA,' the letter began,

'David Willoughby is no better; isn't it dreadful? But the doctors think he *may* get better at last. We were *so* surprised to find that George was the boy who was saved. There is an account of it in the Valehead papers. Mumsie did not like it being put in "a nephew of Lady Katherine Burnley,

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residing at Heathfield, and a near relative of the Earl of Smallborough." Mumsie was fearfully put out, and consulted old General Hawkins about it, and *he* is to write a letter and contradict it.

'Such *thousands* of people come to inquire for David. Collingwood—I ought to say *Mr.* Collingwood—who is so *delightful*, is always hanging about here. I talk to him a great deal, I assure you, and he is *very* nice. It is very tiresome about the concert; all that is over, though of course no one can think of the concert now.

'The little boys, Andrew and Bernard, are gone to an old friend of Mrs. Willoughby's, and Gilbert and Edgar to Farnham. They want to keep the house quiet. Cara and Fraser begged to stay. I can't make Cara out; she won't speak or let me be sorry for her. I have only seen Mrs. Willoughby twice; she looks ages older—Mumsie says sixty at least—since this happened. Little Cosy is here a great deal. Mumsie has taken an immense fancy to her. *I* find her rather spoiled, and don't care so much about her.

'Your picture looks so melancholy in the Willoughbys' drawing-room not finished. When are you coming back? You must be sick of those vulgar Hunters. I always thought there was great excuse for George.

'Gerard was asked to go to Uncle Robert's, and Mumsie was quite charmed. It was the very first time

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either of us has been invited to Smallborough Park. Now he is gone, it is duller than ever. It is a week to-day since that accident, and it seems like a year. I am going to a half-juvenile party at Bishop-Hampstead on Friday. I don't care much for those sort of things now, but it is better than nothing; though really and truly I am miserable about David. All the college masters who are in Valehead come to inquire for him, and Dr. Maunsell wrote to Mrs. Willoughby. They, the Maunsells, are at Florence. Major Willoughby telegraphed back:—"Have a London opinion at once," and I believe they are going to get a great doctor to come; but, as Mumsie says, a fee of a hundred guineas must be almost *ruin* to the Willoughbys. Oh, it *is* dreadfully sad! I will write again. Forgive all the mistakes. Thompson is making a blue velvet dress for Cosy. Mumsie treats her like a doll, and the heaps of chocolate that child eats would amaze you. Old Ready, *alias* Miss Masterman, quite agrees with Mumsie that I am beyond her management. Isn't *that* good news? No more of "*Ready*" after Easter!

'Ever your loving cousin,

'MAUDE.

'P.S.—I have got a rose-coloured sash, and a lot of satin of the same colour put on my cashmere. It does not look bad. Mr. Collingwood is going to this party at Lady Holt's. I forgot to say little Miss

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Johnstone is for *ever* at St. Winifred's. They seem very fond of her.'

The orthography of this letter was, to say the least of it, uncertain; but from the mystic characters in which Maude delighted, some words might pass as correctly spelt.

'Letters are sometimes very unlike the writers, but Maude Burnley's could only be written by Maude,' Frieda thought, as she folded it and put it in the envelope. 'It is precisely as she talks—a confused medley, out of which herself appears prominently; but still she tells me what I want to know, so I ought not to be too critical.'

As the days passed on at the Avenue, Broxholme, Frieda began to question what was to be the next step? How long was she to stay with the Hunters, and what was George to do? Was he to return to the office, or was he to be apprenticed to the doctor?

Everything seemed to have come to a dead pause, which no one had courage to break in upon by a direct question. Little Miss Johnstone would very soon have ended the suspense by a few straightforward words; but Frieda sat evening after evening—with George in a comfortable chair on one side of the fire, and Mr. Hunter on the other, with Mrs. Hunter at the table with a basket of work before her, and old Jip stretched out on the hearthrug—unable to begin the subject about which she longed

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to speak. The silence was only interrupted by a remark about her work from Mrs. Hunter, or a yawn from her husband, or a little bit of information culled out of the local newspaper about some Broxholme people.

The crisis came unexpectedly at last, and was brought about by the arrival one evening of no less a person than Mr. Bigsby. He gave a knock at the door which instantly made Mrs. Hunter start up, saying, 'There's Mr. Bigsby,' with an anxious look at George, as in times past, when he came to complain of some school misdemeanour.

Mr. Bigsby came into the room the next minute, and was greeted with great respect.

'Well, sir, and how have you enjoyed your holidays? Here is some one you ought to know; and this is his sister, Miss Frieda Burnley.'

To Frieda Mr. Bigsby bowed with becoming dignity, and said to George:

'Well, George Burnley, you have sought, as I expected, the shelter of home, when you had found that there was no place like it. It is an admirable thing to learn wisdom by experience. Experience, George Burnley, is a better schoolmaster than I am; and the school of adversity better than the academy at Broxholme—eh, George?'

George had risen from his seat, and stood with his back to the chimney-piece, nervously twisting the book he had been reading in his hand.

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'I have been, Mr. Hunter, as you know, visiting friends in the Isle of Wight. Local papers for the time were a sealed book to me. Indeed, when I take a holiday, I do it in earnest; for my motto is, as George knows, Work while you work; play while you play. But,' said Mr. Bigsby, 'on my return I found a great heap of papers and letters awaiting me, and I chanced to open a copy of the *Valehead Express*, where my eye fell upon a paragraph which certainly has an interest for me. The paragraph is headed "St. Benedict's Cave," and there is an account of a young gentleman, a nephew of Lady Katherine Burnley, falling over the rock above the cave; but, his fall being broken by the narrow ledge below, he was rescued from his perilous position by the bravery of a young man, "the son, we hear, of a staff officer serving in India. We regret to state that the young man lies in a most critical condition from injuries received in the rescue of his friend." And I hear, George, that it is you who were thus rescued from a fearful death.'

'Yes, sir,' George said; 'I was saved by David Willoughby, and he has suffered dreadfully from his efforts for me; and I wish to say, sir, that I am very much ashamed of myself for the way I have behaved, and that what Willoughby said to me, when I went to see him after the accident, has somehow shown me what a selfish brute I have been. My uncle and aunt are only too kind to me, and I wish to ask their

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forgiveness in your presence, sir, and my sisters, and say I am ready to do what they wish, and take the place in the office to-morrow, and learn the business. And if ever I come to any good, it will be all owing to Willoughby.'

This speech, delivered with real emotion, was perhaps rather too long, but it struck Mr. Bigsby as very appropriate and right-minded. It sent George's aunt into a fit of crying, and Mr. Hunter said, with all his old emphasis:

'Bygones are bygones, my boy. Shake hands, and let us hope on, hope ever.'

Frieda might have wished that there had been a little less said by George, and a fuller acknowledgment of his faults; but it was not for her to withhold her words of forgiveness when her uncle and aunt were so ready with theirs. She rose from her chair and went up to her brother, putting her hand within his arm.

'I am so glad, George, you see that you have been wrong, and I know you will do all you can to atone for the past.'

Then there suddenly swept over Frieda the remembrance of her childish days, and that she and George were left alone, the nearest earthly tie that either had in the world. She leaned her head for a moment against his shoulder, and he stooped down and kissed her. And thus peace was ratified, and a new order of things had begun.

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Mr. Bigsby stayed to supper, and was called upon to admire Frieda's pictures. He was pleased to praise them greatly, and told George that he ought to be proud to have so gifted a sister.

'May I ask,' Mr. Bigsby said, 'if you take commissions for your pictures?'

The colour rushed to Frieda's face, but she replied quickly:

'Oh yes! I am very glad to earn money by painting.'

'Then,' said Mr. Bigsby, 'I should be pleased if you would take my portrait. I would offer ten guineas down, and——'

'You shall do no such thing, sir,' said Mr. Hunter; 'I shall make it right with my niece, and you must accept it as a proof of my obligations to you for your care of the boy.'

Mr. Hunter accompanied these words with sundry signs to Frieda, with eyes and mouth, and he murmured aside to her:

'I'll double that price, but mum's the word.'

'The school opens the day after to-morrow,' Mr. Bigsby said. 'When shall I have my first sitting? Your uncle's offer is like himself—generous—very generous, not to say noble. But it is not my habit to take advantage of generosity; so the original scheme remains.'

'I am afraid,' Frieda began, 'I shall be obliged to leave Broxholme in a day or two.'

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'Leave Broxholme! Nonsense, my dear!' said Mr. Hunter. 'She's not going off yet, sir, I can tell her. I hope *never*.'

'I must return to Valehead, Uncle John,' Frieda said. 'I——'

'Well, well! we will talk about that to-morrow. Anyhow, Mr. Bigsby's picture must be finished. Say first sitting at an early hour to-morrow.'

'Very good, sir; my two head-ushers will return this evening, and I can leave the machinery of preparation at the academy to them, and consider myself free to sit to Miss Burnley.'

Poor Frieda's heart sank within her. She foresaw that her 'study' would be a far more difficult one than any she had before attempted, and it was not precisely an interesting one. But it seemed that there was no possibility of drawing back now, and she was obliged to submit with as good a grace as possible.

George heard no more of his uncle's intentions that evening; but the next morning, when Mr. Hunter pushed back his chair, and prepared to depart to the office, George said:

'Am I to come with you, Uncle John?'

'To Mr. Price's, the doctor, before he begins his round. You shall hear what he has to say, and I hope we shall see you driving about in your carriage, and attending all the great families in the neighbourhood.'

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'You are awfully kind,' George faltered. 'I'll try to do my best.'

So it was arranged; a good premium was paid, after the old-fashioned custom, and George became an apprentice to Mr. Price. The trial was to be for two years; and at the end of that time, if George showed signs of really working at the profession, Mr. Hunter agreed to send him to London, to go through the necessary routine to make him a duly qualified practitioner.

Frieda felt daily more and more surprised at the forbearance and forgiveness with which George was treated. She, who had always regarded him as something of a martyr, now doubted if such very smooth waters were good for him. He began to recover his spirits, to talk of his skill in the surgery, to assume a 'grown-up flourish,' which was sometimes almost more than Frieda could bear patiently, and she was not sorry when, Mr. Bigsby's portrait completed, she was free to return to Valehead.

Her work at Broxholme seemed done. George was reinstated as a son in his uncle's home; and Mrs. Hunter, rejoicing over her lost piece of silver, was always ready to extol its lustre, and to call upon others to rejoice with her.

Mr. Bigsby's portrait was pronounced a grand success, and indeed Frieda had taken full advantage of the artist's license, and so idealized Mr. Bigsby

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that it was not wonderful, when comparing Frieda's portrait with a full-sized picture hanging in his dining-room, which had all the faithful and hard delineation of a sign-board, that he should say:

'"Look on this picture and on that," as the great Shakespeare has it. Yours, Miss Frieda, is the scholar and the man of letters; the other, the mere man, the outside of the man and nothing more.'

Frieda resisted all persuasions and entreaties to prolong her visit, and held firmly to her resolution to return to Valehead on the 1st of March.

The accounts of David were neither better nor worse. At his father's express desire, a 'London doctor' had been asked for his opinion. It differed very little from that of the Valehead doctors, and the chief prescription was rest and entire stillness, except when the splints and bandages were removed by the doctor, and the neck and shoulders released from the confinement which was thought needful.

'I shall be glad when you come home,' Miss Johnstone said to Frieda. 'I think David longs to see you. His patience is wonderful: he seldom complains; but he said to me to-day, "It's much harder to look at the future than endure the present." I know what he means. He thinks he will never get to Oxford now, nor be able to work for others, as he hoped.'

It was Frieda's last evening. Mr. Hunter was in

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his 'back-room,' as he called it, poring over some accounts, when Frieda tapped at the door.

'May I come in, Uncle John?' she said. She had long since learned to call him uncle.

'Come in; yes, my dear. You are welcome, though I am a bit angry with you for leaving us.'

'You are so kind,' Frieda said. 'I want to thank you, only I cannot say half what I feel. But, dear Uncle John, *please* let me pay you George's debt; here is the money.' Frieda laid it on her uncle's desk—the bank-notes, which had been waiting so long. 'It will make me happier, for you know I worked for George, and now he wants no help of mine. I see now, so plainly, that he never did, or could, want my help while he lived with you; and it will be a little comfort to me if you will take the money. I don't want it; and it will make me happier, Uncle John.'

'Well, I'd do anything to make you happier, my dear. You have crept into my heart from the day when I came to Downside Park about the boy, and expected to find you a grand, airified young lady, scorning your uncle, and all that. My dear, I will take the money, and you will hear more about it some day.'

'Thank you, dear Uncle John,' Frieda said. 'And you won't pay me for Mr. Bigsby's portrait?'

Mr. Hunter burst out laughing.

'Yes, yes; I must do that. Twenty pounds. You

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did flatter the schoolmaster, more than you flattered your old uncle. It's enough to make a cat laugh to see him standing before it with the ushers and boys, and glorying over it. Well, well, we are all of us poor vain creatures. But for my part, I think we ought to leave vanity to womankind.'

Frieda joined in her uncle's laugh, and then she said more seriously:

'I hope poor George will do well now, Uncle John. If there is a fault, I think you and Aunt Ellen are too kind to him.'

'Well, well, my dear, I want to see the boy happy; and anything is better than to have aunt fretting herself to a thread-paper, as she did when he was gone no one knew where. And I hope *you* are happy now,' Mr. Hunter added. 'I always thought you a trifle too grave for your age. I like to see the young joyful. We can't be young twice; and if ever you want a home, or any help, you come straight off to me. If George is our son, you are like a daughter, mind that.'

'I am much happier than I was, dear Uncle John. But friends of mine at Downside Park are in sad trouble. David Willoughby gets no better, and I fear he never will be well. I cannot bear to think he is suffering from his noble efforts to save George. And I am so anxious to get back to see him and his mother.'

'Poor fellow! Are they badly off, Frieda?' For

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Mr. Hunter's practical mind always turned to the pecuniary side of the question, not indeed as many do, for his own interest, but that he might help those who were in want of what he possessed.

'They are not rich,' Frieda said. 'Colonel Willoughby has a good staff appointment in India, at Allahabad; but there are eight children, of whom David is the eldest son.'

'Dear, dear! I hope they will let me show some sign of my gratitude for what the young fellow did for George. You must try and find out, my dear, and let me know.'

Then Mr. Hunter fitted his spectacles on his nose, as a sign that the interview was over, and returned with a prolonged yawn to his accounts.

'George ought to be helping him,' Frieda thought, as she returned to the parlour, where she found her aunt at work.

'Where is George this evening, Aunt Ellen?'

'He is gone out to supper with a friend of Mr. Price's; he called for him just after you had left the room. He said he was sorry to miss you this last evening; but I told him you would not mind, dear.'

Frieda was silent. George was still the same George, and she doubted if any radical change had taken place; and again Frieda said to herself, though not to Mrs. Hunter, he wanted a sharper discipline. His lesson has been scarcely hard enough. And then Frieda thought how Penelope Johnstone would

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have been able to give George some good words of advice before parting from him, while *she* was dumb.

There was no doubt that there was now stirring in Frieda's heart higher aspirations, and a growing conviction that the faith which gave Mrs. Willoughby calmness and strength, and David patience and courage, and Penelope Johnstone real happiness in the service which to many would look like drudgery, was all-powerful. That faith in God's love, which brightened Pennella's plain face into beauty, as it shone from her eyes; that trust and confidence, that desire to walk as He walked Who pleased not Himself —surely it would change the colour of life as nothing else did. She had become much more earnest of late in prayer, and had often felt its reality for herself. But to George, and to her uncle and aunt, she *could* not tell what lay so deep in the recesses of her heart.

This reserve and unwillingness to speak is felt by many beside Frieda. But if we cannot *speak* we can always *live*, so that those who know us may see that the light is shining, reflecting, however faintly, the light of Him Who *is* our Sun and Shield. Therefore let us all take heed to this, and take comfort in it also.

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CHAPTER XXI.

AWAKENING.

THERE is in us all the power of conforming to a new order of things which the young, having no experience to guide them, are slow to believe possible. 'I shall never get accustomed to this.' 'No place can ever be home to me again.' 'I cannot endure the thought of the change.' And yet time passes, and the strange things become familiar. The new thing is no longer new, the dreaded change brings its own compensations with it.

When first, one in whom we trust for a lifelong friendship fails us, and the prop on which we have leaned proves a broken reed, the sense of betrayal and loss is overwhelming. But we live to look back to the pain we endured, and wonder at the

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tears we shed, and can even, perhaps, rejoice where once we sorrowed, at the breaking of a tie which seemed so precious and lasting. It is the universal law, and we all bow to it insensibly. It is the law of God's tenderness and wisdom combined: for He knows our frame, and He remembers we are but dust. Thus the keen edge of suffering is blunted, and fresh interests and joys are sent to help us on our way. The way may seem to stretch through the desert, but the good land lies beyond, and the water-springs break forth, and the streams flow softly, while glimpses are from time to time granted of Zion, towards which our faces are set.

When first Mrs. Willoughby saw her brave, noble son laid low, the contrast between his active joyous life, and the quiet endurance of weariness and pain, which seemed all that was left to him, was sorrow which at times was agony.

She felt as if her gourd had withered, and the very spring of her best joys dried up.

For the weeks and the months passed, and David Willoughby was still lying upon his invalid couch, carried downstairs on it in the morning by two of his young brothers and Cara and Nurse, and carried up again at night. There was but little change in his condition from day to day—little to mark the improvement, which, the doctors said, was chiefly seen in that there was no retrograde movement,

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and perhaps a slight increase of power, which they were afraid to test prematurely.

When Frieda first came back from Broxholme, she dreaded seeing David, and was glad to stay only a few minutes. When she had told him of George, and his reception by his kind relations, there seemed nothing else to say. She could hardly trust herself to look at him, and David was at this time very silent.

'Uncomplaining, but silent,' was his mother's report to his father. 'The boys come and go from the college; his chief friend, Collingwood, pays him a daily visit, Gerard Burnley and Maude an occasional one, but he seems unable to rouse himself to talk to them.

'He is patient, with a patience that goes near to break my heart. I looked forward to Frieda's return from Broxholme, hoping she would be able to interest him about the boy whose life he saved; but it is with her as with good little Miss Johnstone: he smiles a welcome when they come, but he has but little to say: and so the days go on.'

Yes, so the days went on, and only He from Whom no secrets are hid, and Who knows the very secrets of the heart, could tell what was passing in the heart of this brave boy.

It was a fight and a struggle, and he must go through it alone. Even his mother could not follow him on that battle-field; even her love must fail there. David was in the thick of a conflict, while the an-

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gels, those 'ministers of His who do His pleasure,' stood by and strengthened him.

Every morning and evening his mother read the lessons and psalms of the day with him; but he who had hitherto taken every spare moment for study, never asked for books. His little Greek Testament lay by his side, and now and then he would open it and read a little, but not for long together; and his mother would watch him close it with a sigh, and her heart would ache for him.

The long summer term was coming to an end, and those who were connected with the college at Valehead were all going away, bound for Switzerland, or Wales, or Scotland. Gerard Burnley had, to his mother's great satisfaction, made such a favourable impression on his uncle, Lord Smallborough, that he had invited him for a cruise in his yacht for August and September.

Lady Katherine and Maude were going to Ilfracombe, and Frieda was told that if she wished to do so she could of course accompany them.

'I wish very much to take that dear child Cosy, but Mrs. Willoughby does not respond to my offer. She is a very strange person.'

'I don't think she likes to part with Cosy,' Frieda said, 'because David has taken more notice of her lately, and seems to be interested in that picture on which I am at work again.'

'Poor boy!' Lady Katherine said: 'he is in a

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most melancholy condition. I should fear his brain is affected, he is so peculiar.'

'Oh, Aunt Katherine!' Frieda exclaimed; 'how can you say such a thing?'

'Well, my dear, determined silence is often a sign of—madness, or, let us say eccentricity.'

'I think it is dreadful to talk of David in that way. It is shameful,' Frieda said, with all her old irritation. 'I only hope you do not say this to other people.'

'My dear Frieda, you have a very unfortunate way of setting down your elders, and may I say, your superiors. Since your return from Broxholme, I have noticed an increased tendency in you to do this. If life here with me is so unpalatable, when you are of age you are at liberty to seek another home.'

'I have another home offered me,' Frieda said, the brightest colour rising in her face, 'and I can go there whenever I choose.'

'Very well, my love,' Lady Katherine said, with provoking coolness; 'when you are of age—next January, is it not?—you are free, if you *have* another home, by your dear uncle's will, to leave me. He anticipated, no doubt, that you would marry; but as that seems improbable——'

Frieda waited to hear no more. She was too angry to make any rejoinder, and all her late self-control seemed broken down. As she was crossing the little lobby, she saw Bernard standing on the steps, for the door was open.

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'Please could you come in and see David?' the child said; 'he wants to see you. Mother is gone for a drive with Cosy, and Cara has taken Andrew out, and there is only me with David, and Nurse, of course,' he added.

It was the first time that David had sent any message to Frieda. In all those four months since her return from Broxholme, he had expressed no particular desire to see her, or to talk to her. The picture of Cosy had lately begun to interest him a little, and Frieda worked at it sometimes in the drawing-room, which was now called David's room. But he had seldom said more than that he thought it was very like Cosy, and that it was the best picture she had done. Now he had sent little Bernard to fetch her, and her face was wet with angry tears, and her whole spirit ruffled.

'It is far better to leave Aunt Katherine than live in a state of perpetual chafe and vexation. Aunt Ellen is worth ten thousand of her.'

These words were in her heart, if not on her lips; and little Bernard, receiving his answer, 'Say I will come in ten minutes,' ran back to his post in the bay window of the drawing-room, exclaiming:

'She'll come in ten minutes, David; but she has got such a red face, and I think she has been crying, she looked so cross!'

David made no rejoinder to this, and it was some time before Frieda appeared.

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It was easy to see that she had been crying, for traces of tears were still on her flushed face. Poor Frieda had been trying to keep down her angry and resentful feelings against Lady Katherine, and now she seemed to have gone back to the old times before her visit to Broxholme.

There was a sense of failure and disappointment about herself which is always hard to bear, perhaps harder than disappointment about others. David noticed at once how sad and depressed Frieda was, and he said in his old cheerful tone:

'Sit down opposite, please—I can't turn my head —and tell me how your brother is going on.'

'He seems very happy now, thank you,' Frieda said; 'and the doctor, Mr. Price, thinks he has great capabilities for chemistry, and that he may succeed as a doctor if he has perseverance to study for the examinations. But I rather doubt that.'

'And *you*,' David said; 'how are you getting on? It is so long since I heard anything of you. My own fault, I know. I have been living in my own concerns, as if there were none other in the world. A very selfish life, but I am coming out of it now. I begin to see a little light in the darkness, and I hope to bear this trouble better.'

'You have borne it beautifully and nobly,' Frieda faltered. 'I don't believe anybody else could have been so patient.'

'Oh yes, they could; but it has been a hard struggle.

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You see, I have not been able to make God's will *mine*. That is very different from what people call accepting trouble as His will. The thing is, to feel that we have so made a surrender of ourselves—heart, soul, and body—that His will is ours. Now, for a long time I have been trying to *bear* it, but that is like bearing a heavy load which is too heavy and crushing. Now the load seems lightened, if not taken off; and I am much happier, and I hope I shall make other people happier too. I have been selfish enough to lie here, refusing to be pleased or care about anything. I am going to get out all my books again, and see what I can do. I have not really much, if any pain. It is only a sort of longing to move. When I see the College fellows going past the house on a paper chase, I feel as if I must rush out and join them; and for a long time I used to stuff my fingers in my ears, that I might not hear the boys' footsteps going down the steps to school every morning. That sort of longing is pain in itself. But let us talk about something else. Your picture of Cosy is beautiful. I want my father to have it soon, and I want you to try to make a companion to it of my mother. Come here and work at it. Not in the dining-room, you know, but here; and I have been wondering if you would help me with my work.'

'Can I?' Frieda asked eagerly.

'Yes; you write such a nice small clear hand, and

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whatever I do now must be written out for me. Cara and my mother have too much upon them already—taking care of me all day long, and my mother all night too. I am planning to get my mother's and Cosy's pictures ready to go out to India for Christmas. When will you begin it?'

'As soon as possible,' Frieda said, 'for I think I shall go away in the spring. As soon as I am of age I need not stay here.'

'Go away! where will you go?'

'To Broxholme. They are so very kind to me there, and *here*, I cannot say it is the same. Aunt Katherine and I never could agree. She has such very different ideas from mine. She looks upon me as an infliction which must be borne. We give each other no mutual pleasure: so it is far better to part.'

David was silent for a little while, and Frieda began to play nervously with the end of a book-marker, which was hanging from a copy of Longfellow's poems on the table. Presently David broke the silence by saying:

'I must not say how much I wish you to stay here; it would be selfish; but I do wish it with all my heart. And I think you ought to try to get on with Lady Katherine. There would be difficulties at Broxholme.'

'I know there would. I know things would often jar on me, as they did when I was there; but my uncle

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and aunt have real feeling, while Aunt Katherine has none. She is simply as selfish as she can be. Even her love for her children is selfish.'

'I know you must have suffered very often,' David said with a sigh; 'still, I hope you won't go away. Now, shall we try if you can take down a little at my dictation?—there is some paper and a pencil.'

Frieda seated herself at the table, and David asked her to give him two books. Then he dictated some translations from Æschylus, and she took them down on paper. Once or twice David said he was wrong, and then he began all over again, and Frieda did the same. After working for an hour, David shut his eyes and said:

'That is all I can do to-day, thanks.'

The heavy sigh which followed these words went to Frieda's heart; she rose quietly and put away the paper, and called Nurse.

'He seems very much exhausted,' Frieda said. 'I think you had better go and see if he wants anything.'

'He is not fit for books,' said Nurse, almost angrily. 'I hope you have not been letting him bother his head about any learning?'

'He asked me to help him a little, and I did not think I was doing any harm.'

'Well, I must speak to Mrs. Willoughby about it, and she will hear what the doctors say. What has become of little Miss Johnstone, I wonder? we have seen nothing of her for a week.'

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Frieda felt guilty of neglecting Pennella, and determined to go after luncheon and inquire for her. Mrs. Willoughby met her at the gate of St. Winifred's. Her first question was always:

'How is David? Have you been sitting with him, Frieda? I am so glad.'

'He sent for me,' Frieda said, stooping down to kiss Cosy's sweet little upturned face. 'He is so anxious you should sit to me for a picture, to go out to India with Cosy's. And I have been writing down some translations of Greek poets from his dictation.'

'He must not do too much hard work,' Mrs. Willoughby said quickly. 'The doctors have warned me against it. By-the-bye, Frieda, I have not seen Pennella Johnstone for some days; have you heard from her?'

'I dare say she is finishing off some picture,' Frieda said; 'she works so hard. I will go to Manilla Place this afternoon, and tell you the result. I think David is better,' Frieda said; 'he was more like his old self to me to-day.'

Mrs. Willoughby sighed. 'He will never be well again, Frieda. I am trying to resign myself to this; but I am thankful that he is able to interest himself again in any way, though we must be careful not to overdo it. Come in again later, and then I will give you my first sitting.'

'I must order the canvas first, and go to Manilla

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Place,' Frieda said. 'Do you think Cara would like to walk there with me?'

'Yes; I will tell her when she comes in. She has gone out with little Andrew. When is Lady Katherine going to Ilfracombe?'

'Early next week. I have got a plan for asking her to invite Cara, and take her to Ilfracombe instead of me.'

'Cara will not consent, I am afraid,' said Mrs. Willoughby. 'But you may try what you can do. I will send her in at half-past two to walk with you to Valehead.'

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CHAPTER XXII.

FAINT, YET PURSUING.

CARA showed perhaps more than any one the effects of the last few months of nursing and anxiety. She had always, as we know, taken a large share of the care of her young brothers upon her own shoulders, and her naturally reserved nature did not seek for sympathy, as many in her position would have done. She had never drawn much nearer to Frieda: they were, as Frieda would have said, 'very good friends,' but there was no intimate exchange of thought and feelings, which is the very salt and essence of friendship. Cara's was an eminently practical character: she always looked at what was to be done, and did it to the best of her ability.

She never grudged service for those she loved, and everything was done with the greatest punctuality. Cara's was a nature to which routine is an absolute necessity.

Such people are very useful members of a household, and keep things straight by the force of their own determined movement in a given line. Frieda,

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with her romance, and too much self-introspection, was a great contrast to Cara. There was in her a hunger for love and appreciation, a thirst for signs of the goodwill of those around her, and a longing for the ties of home which had been broken for her so early in life, and which had never been united again. We know with what blind devotion she had made her brother George the centre of her efforts, and how bitterly she had felt the disappointment when she found, after all, he cared more for the indulgence of his home at Broxholme, and less about the 'vulgarity' of his surroundings, than she had imagined.

Evidently George had found that it was better to be petted and made a hero of by his Aunt Ellen, than to work single-handed for a higher position which involved self-sacrifice and unremitting labour.

But none of these things could Frieda confide to Cara: none of her own aspirations to advance as an artist: none of the vexations which were daily her lot at Heathfield.

'She would not understand me,' Frieda always said: and she was conscious that Cara had something akin to contempt for any who could not accommodate themselves to circumstances. She did not like Lady Katherine herself, and she found Maude's affectations and vanity very irritating; but then it was not her *duty* to put up with them, and clearly it *was* Frieda's duty!

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David's long illness, and the change which it had brought about in the daily life at that once happy home had been a very deep trial to Cara. I do not know whether it had softened her, except indeed towards her mother and David himself. To them she was invariably tender, and would do anything to help or comfort them. But her little brothers were inclined to think she was stricter than ever, and there were often symptoms of positive rebellion amongst the elder boys, which nothing but the love they all felt for their mother would have prevented from breaking out. Cara longed sometimes inexpressibly for her father, who had all the regular discipline of the true soldier about him, and her young face began to show lines of care which did not escape her mother's eyes, and made Nurse anxious.

It was always difficult to persuade her to take any recreation, and when her mother proposed, as she had promised, that she should walk into Valehead with Frieda, the usual answer was ready:—

'I cannot; I must give Bernard and Andrew their music lesson; and Cosy must do her lessons, as we were out all the morning.'

Nurse, who heard this rejoinder, threw in the remark:

'There, Miss Cara, go and take a walk without the children for once, for you don't look "the thing," and that's the truth.'

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Mrs. Willoughby turned quickly on Cara, and said: 'Yes, my dear child; Nurse is quite right; you must give yourself more relaxation; and I hope, if it can be arranged, you will go to Ilfracombe with Lady Katherine, and let Frieda come to me.'

Cara's face clouded over at once, and tears started to her eyes. 'If—if you do not want me, I can go, of course.'

'Cara, dear Cara,' her mother said, in a sad reproachful voice. 'Oh! Cara, you know how much you are to me; it is for your own sake I say this.'

But the words had their effect on Cara; and when on their way to Valehead, Frieda timidly suggested that perhaps she would like to go to Ilfracombe with Lady Katherine and let her take her place at St. Winifred's, she did not negative the proposal as decidedly as Frieda had expected.

'The sea air will do you good,' she said, 'and the bathing; and Aunt Katherine likes you a hundred times better than she likes me: and Maude has a little wholesome fear of you, which is as well.'

'I will think over it,' Cara said. 'In the first place, Lady Katherine has not absolutely invited me; and in the next, I do not see how you could take my place; for though Edgar and Gilbert are going to Farnham, Fraser and the little boys are a handful to manage, at least the little boys are. Fraser is very

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good, and his violin is enough amusement for him.'

'I shall ask Aunt Katherine this evening, and let you know. I am certain you want change, Cara, and you will come back all the fresher for it.'

'While David remains like this,' Cara said, 'no one in our house can feel fresh or bright.'

'I think—I hope, he is getting better,' Frieda ventured to say; 'he sent for me this morning.'

'Sent for you! What for?'

'To write down some verses from his dictation,' Frieda replied, feeling instantly that she had make a mistake.

'That is what exhausted him so much then,' Cara exclaimed; 'the doctors are so very decided that he should not work his brain too much. I am sure that must not be allowed again.' Frieda felt that Cara was vexed, and said no more.

They went into Valehead first, to do some shopping and order the canvas for Mrs. Willoughby's picture. Then on their way home they turned towards Manilla Place. The blinds were drawn down, and Frieda exclaimed:

'Something must have happened. I scarcely like to ring the bell.'

She was spared the necessity of doing so, for the door opened and Pennella herself stood before them. Her face was very white, and she said:

'I was just coming over to tell you that my poor

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father has been taken from us. Come in, up to my room, please; my sister is in the sitting-room, and I think she is asleep.'

The two girls followed Pennella to her room, with the hushed careful movement which always seems to be natural to us in the house of death. The easel stood by the window with a canvas on it: tired, sad, or weary, Pennella must paint; there was no reprieve for her.

'My father has been weaker for some time,' she said; 'but I did not think the end was near. The day before yesterday he wandered more than usual —talking to my mother, and fancying I was a little girl again, living in our house with poor Beauchamp then suddenly he grew quite clear, asked me to read the fourteenth chapter of St. Luke to him, thanked me'—here her voice faltered—'for all I had done—for him, and blessed me. I left him the night before last with that blessing on his lips, and quite himself. In the morning, when I went as usual with his breakfast, he did not know me. Another stroke of paralysis had fallen, and he was gone in a few hours. It has been very terrible for Amy; death frightens her, and she has lost all self-control. But oh!' Pennella exclaimed, 'there is much to be thankful for: no pain for him, and release from the care and anxiety which presses upon me. I have been so very, very much in want of money.'

'Oh! why should you be?' Frieda exclaimed.

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'I have some money: take it, it is yours; for remember how you stood by me when I was so unhappy about George.'

Pennella's lips quivered, and her face was ashen-white, but she did not shed any tears.

'I have been working very hard,' she said, 'at orders for the shop—pictures which do not do me any real benefit to paint; but I have failed to keep up to the daily needs. I have now several bills to pay, and then there is his funeral.'

The brave spirit seemed broken at last. Pennella sank into a chair, while Cara knelt by her, and chafed her cold hands, and Frieda leaned over her, and kissed and caressed her. But neither Cara nor Frieda dreamed of what was actually the case —that Pennella was suffering from insufficient nourishment, and that she had denied herself continually during the last few months that her father and sister might have the little luxuries for which they pined.

'If Cara will stay here,' Frieda said, 'I will go home and bring you what you need. Pennella, do not look so dreadfully sad,' and poor Frieda burst into tears.

But Cara went to call Phœbe, whose rosy face was stained with crying. 'Get your mistress something; she is very faint and cold,' she said. 'She must have something at once.'

'Ah, miss!' Phœbe said, 'no one knows what Miss Johnstone has gone through, working for them

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that are not too grateful to her. I don't mean the poor master—he was like a child; but as to Miss Amy, I have no common patience with her, and that's the truth. She has been enough to wear us out, the last few hours. The child Nelly from Queen's Court is come to sit with her, for she dare not be left alone. There's a good drop of beef-tea,' she said, 'and I'll make it hot, and come up with it directly.'

Cara then returned to Pennella, and found her sobbing quietly on Frieda's shoulder. The long strain was over, and God had sent her the blessed relief of tears.

'There is so much to do,' Pennella said, 'and so much to arrange. I must not give way. Do not stay with me. I must go to Amy.'

'I shall stay here,' Cara said in her quick, decided way. 'I shall not leave you: and Frieda will go home and tell mother where I am. I cannot leave you,' she repeated. 'You, who have done so much for other people, shall not be left to bear this burden alone, if I can help it.'

Frieda met Phœbe coming up with the beef-tea; and as she stood in the little dark lobby, she heard sounds of crying from the sitting-room. It was Amy breaking out again into hysterical cries. Frieda did not feel as if she could face her; her whole heart went out in sympathy with the unselfish sister who bore the heavy burden alone.

At the door she met the clergyman, Mr. Booth,

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who had known Pennella as the originator of the good work in Queen's Court. He had been away for his summer holiday, and had only just returned. A woman from Queen's Court had been to St. John's Vicarage with the news that little Miss Johnstone was in great distress.

'I am very sorry to hear of this fresh trouble here,' he said, addressing Frieda. 'I only returned last night, and I am come to see what service I can render to my poor friend.'

'Oh, thank you,' said Frieda earnestly. 'She sorely wants some help. She has no relations to turn to, and is very desolate. She is nearly worked to death,' she added vehemently. 'It is too dreadful to think of. And we have all been making so much of our own small troubles—I mean, I have—and quite forgot hers, just because she went about with a bright face instead of a sad one, and kept herself and the little home and her father and sister so neat and tidy. We have been blind to the fact of what she has been suffering. I do feel so vexed, so angry with myself. Do go in, please. I will tell Phœbe to let her know you are here. And listen to those cries! It is that sister of hers crying and screaming.'

'I think it will be more to the purpose if I go to *her*, and try to stop that, at any rate,' said Mr. Booth. 'It is beyond endurance.'

He passed Frieda, and she saw him enter the

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house, and then she retraced her steps to Downside Park.

Mrs. Willoughby was always 'at leisure from herself' to sympathize. She was never too busy to be kind: and she listened to Frieda's account of little Miss Johnstone's sorrows with the deepest concern.

'Cara is with her, and Mr. Booth, the clergyman, was just going in as I came out. He will help, I hope. But I want to help. I have still some money —a part of it, saved up for George, and Pennella must have it. If you would take it to her—if you *could* take it to her, it would be so kind, and I will sit with David.'

'Yes, I will go at once,' Mrs. Willoughby said, 'if you will entrust me with the mission.'

'And tell her money is nothing. Don't let her thank me. I could not bear to be thanked—I, who have been grumbling over small grievances and troubles, whilst she is so unselfish, and never, never grumbled!'

Mrs. Willoughby went to prepare for her errand, and Frieda rushed across to Heathfield. The brougham was at the door, and Maude, dressed in pink and white, and looking the picture of a pretty, fashionably dressed young lady, stood on the steps, drawing on her long gloves.

'Frieda, this is the day of Lady Morgan's garden-party. Are you not coming with us?'

'No, indeed I am *not*,' said Frieda shortly, as she passed her cousin.

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Lady Katherine was emerging from her room as Frieda passed it, having tried the patience of the much-enduring Thompson to the uttermost. An unbecoming bonnet was a deep trial to Lady Katherine, and she had been so unfortunate as to have received one from her milliner that afternoon ; she was therefore in a less amiable mood than when she had last seen Frieda.

'We can't wait for you,' she said sharply. 'If you are not punctual, you must suffer for it.'

'Wait for me! I do not want you to wait for me, Aunt Katherine. Please let me pass you,' for Lady Katherine's stately figure filled up the whole of the small square landing at the head of the stairs.

'I shall not attempt to make any apology for you to Lady Morgan. If you choose to shun society, *I* am not to blame.'

'Mamma! mamma, darling!' Maude called from the foot of the stairs, 'do pray come. The carriage has been here half an hour. *Do* come.'

But Lady Katherine had gone back to insist on Thompson altering the flower at the side of her bonnet.

'It makes me look a perfect Judy,' she said, with childish vehemence. 'I will *never* go to Mrs. Passmore again.'

'No, my lady,' said Thompson, with a marked emphasis; 'I hope you never will!'

Frieda went to her store, and taking out the crisp bank-notes Mr. Hunter had given her for the picture,

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put them in an envelope with two others, and rushed down again to find Mrs. Willoughby. Maude was still in the hall grumbling at her mother's delay, and declaring that she had been two hours dressing.

'What a fuss you are in, Frieda! what are you doing?' for Frieda, in her haste, had upset a pot of geranium which stood at the head of the steps. 'Oh, what a pity! you have broken the poor thing to bits. Mother *will* be angry.'

But Frieda did not wait to repair the mischief then. She met Mrs. Willoughby, and put the envelope in her hand, just as Lady Katherine was stepping into her carriage.

'Mumsie,' said Maude, 'let me sit back, and then we can take up Mrs. Willoughby.'

'I—I don't know; it will be such a cram.'

'Oh! do, mamma! she is going in our direction, towards Valehead;' and Maude, partly from good nature, and partly, I am afraid, out of opposition to her mother, called to the coachman to stop, and sprang out of the carriage, saying: 'Let us take you to Valehead, Mrs. Willoughby; please do.'

Mrs. Willoughby was very glad to be spared the walk, for since David's illness she had not been very strong. Frieda's envelope was in her hand as she seated herself, and Maude's quick eye read a few words Frieda had hastily scrawled on it: 'With my love—F. B.'

'What can that be about?' Maude thought: and then Lady Katherine asked:

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'Where shall I put you down?'

Mrs. Willoughby answered:

'I am going to Manilla Place, but the nearest point for you will be the corner of the road by St. John's Church. I am going to see poor little Miss Johnstone, the artist, who is in great trouble. Her father is dead, and she has, I am afraid, fought a hard battle with a brave heart against slender means, and has failed to win it altogether.'

'Poor thing! how shocking! Do you mean she is in absolute want?'

'I mean,' said Mrs. Willoughby, 'that she is unable to meet any unexpected expenses, and only able to pay her way week by week. We all know what expenses invalids bring upon a household; and still more, how death implies the need of ready money for things that cannot be set aside.'

'Yes, indeed,' said Lady Katherine; 'I know that mourning in itself is so enormous. Crape is really a fearful expense, and wears so badly.'

Mrs. Willoughby could almost smile, and yet it was sad to see a woman of Lady Katherine's age so utterly ignorant of what poverty really meant. Perhaps Lady Katherine is not a very uncommon type of woman. I greatly fear that a large majority of people in a fashionable place like Valehead, with its suburbs and country neighbourhood, know next to nothing of the *pinch* of small means. They roll along in their carriages; money comes when it is wanted,

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and is freely spent: or they live for a time in luxury and ease, on credit, which unwary tradespeople are foolish enough to grant; and they give no thought to the hundreds about them who are conscientiously striving to meet the demands of a large family, to educate their boys, to give their girls needful advantages, to put as it were tools into the hands of their children whereby they may earn their own living. The idea of helping such workers does not enter into the minds of the Lady Katherines of the world; and if the outward appearance is, as in little Miss Johnstone's case, careful and neat, the idea of a struggle for life does not come within the range of their superficial glance over men and things. How many brave workers for their own families, like Pennella Johnstone, would go on their way with a lighter burden, if some substantial help were occasionally offered by a loving hand. There are some who know how to do this—who come with their gift so sweetly and graciously, that the value is increased a thousand-fold—who confer the favour as a *double* gain, and who leave behind with the gift, the memory of the giver while life lasts, like the hidden fragrance of a violet in the hedgerow in spring.

As I write I can recall some such who have, I doubt not, received the good measure of blessing, *pressed down*, which the self-seeking and selfish ones can never know.

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CHAPTER XXIII.

PLANS.

FRIENDS rallied round poor Pennella in her time of need, and the cry of her heart in the first hour of her desolation and perplexity was stilled: 'Why hidest Thou Thyself in the needful time of trouble?' He had not failed of His promise, and the dark clouds were clearing away.

Frieda's savings were at last well spent, and Pennella accepted the gift with that direct simplicity which always characterized her.

'I would have done the same for her,' Pennella said to Mrs. Willoughby, 'and I may in some future time be able to show my gratitude.'

We hear a great deal said of the grace of giving, and surely there is the grace of receiving. Some people do not know how to take a gift. They either overdo their thanks, or they receive what is offered in a sullen silence which looks like ungraciousness, though it may arise from shyness. It needs perfect sympathy between giver and receiver to make the gift a mutual pleasure and heart-joy. It was really so

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in this case, and Frieda felt happier than she had done for a long time. It was so sweet to see the cloud lifted from little Miss Johnstone's face, and the anxious expression changed for one of comparative rest.

The great difficulty was poor Amy; and Mrs. Willoughby was right when she said that Pennella had carried her unselfishness to a point which was not true kindness to her sister. Indeed, there is a limit to that entire self-abnegation by which self is effaced.

There is no true kindness in the service for others who *can* help themselves; and we are perhaps unconsciously doing those we love harm, when we have only their good at heart.

Especially is this true of some mothers, who fail to teach their children the beauty of sacrifice by never calling upon them to make it. It is true also in other relations in life, less common in husbands than in wives, and by no means common in either. But to win others to do and to suffer for love's sake, is a higher blessing for them than to do and suffer all things for them.

'I see it now,' Pennella said to Mrs. Willoughby; 'I know what you mean: but I often indulged Amy's whims for my poor father's sake. Besides, you and I cannot tell what it is to be an hysterical invalid. I do believe she suffers as much as if she were really as ill as she thinks she is. I know our doctor says that

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he has the deepest pity for people who are victims to nerves.'

'If you could only get the poor girl to employ herself usefully, and wean her from reading such an amount of unwholesome fiction, I am sure it would do her a service. Represent to her that she must help you to live, and not be wholly dependent on you.'

Pennella could only shake her head. 'It is too late,' she said. 'The habits of thirty-two years cannot be broken in a day.'

With returning energy, Pennella set herself about removal. She sold much of her furniture, and removed some of their little possessions to three unfurnished rooms in Whitelands, helped Phœbe to a good place, and took for her maid little Nelly, to whom Amy had taken a fancy: and in a few weeks she was again at her easel, painting with all her old vigour, and patiently bearing her sister's murmurs and continued fancies about her health.

But Pennella was no longer like one pursued by a threatening storm, which might burst over her head at any moment, and she had courage and power to go on with her painting.

Frieda was sitting with her one day in the upper room at Heathfield. It was an autumn afternoon, and both were reminded of the time, a year ago, when Frieda had asked Pennella to criticize 'Her only Friend.'

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'I have a plan about the future,' Frieda said. 'I want to go to Italy with you, and study at Rome and Florence. My uncle would give me the money at once, and I can leave Aunt Katherine next spring, when I am of age. We have got on more smoothly of late, but there is no real friendship between us, and by my uncle's will I am free to go if I choose.'

'Would it be right?' Pennella asked, in her old quick way.

'I think so. Why not?'

'It is always dangerous to choose our own way,' Pennella said. 'I could not leave Amy.'

'Oh, I have a plan for her. Aunt Ellen would pet her and console her for all her grievances, and she would behave much better with strangers. Now, what do you say?'

Pennella's eyes brightened. After all those years of drudgery and painting below her powers for daily need, to be free to go to Rome and Florence to make art her one study, was delightful.

'It cannot be,' she said; 'let us not talk of it.'

'I am not so sure, Pennella; we will see what the New Year brings.

The picture on Frieda's easel was Mrs. Willoughby's portrait, now receiving its finishing touches. It was a good but not a striking likeness, and Pennella expressed herself without any hesitation about it.

'It needs the expression of her face,' she said, 'as she looked when she came to me with your gift,

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when she knelt down and prayed that I might have comfort; when I went with her to look at my father in his last long sleep. Ah! there are very few faces that have the light in them that hers had then. So beautiful she looked, that no youth, and no outline of feature, however perfect, could make any face like hers.'

'But this *is* like her,' Frieda said, a little vexed at the criticism which, in her inmost heart, she felt, to be just. 'David thinks so, and Cara. But here is another portrait,' and Frieda placed on the easel an unfinished picture of David Willoughby.

Pennella exclaimed at once: 'Ah! that is quite different. That is beautiful! You know how good this is—I see it by your face.'

'Yes,' Frieda said in a low voice, 'and I cannot study it too much. It is a lesson every time I look at it, to think of the high hopes and aims he has laid quietly aside. To think how he bears all this, brought on him by his efforts to save my brother's life. Oh, Pennella! no words can tell what he is. And I know the battle he fought, in all those long weeks of silence, was a hard one.'

'He is better,' Pennella said. 'I see an improvement in him; he can turn his head a little now, and there seems more power about him.'

'Yes; but Cara agrees with me, that we dread to see him try to stand. If he were to be deformed and unable to hold himself upright, how terrible it would

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be! The doctors will not allow him to think of it yet; and he said to me the other day, that he wondered how it would feel to put his legs down; for, he added: "I feel like Mr. Kavanagh, as if I had no legs at all." Then he went on: "But I have got my brains all right, and that is a comfort!" He sent in some papers to Dr. Maunsell the other day, and you should have seen the remarks written on them. They could not have won higher praise. Edgar has been very troublesome lately, and that has bothered him very much, for he said to me, "I did want to send a good report of the Octave, without a jarring note, for my father, and now he has spoiled it by his last report." Mrs. Willoughby thinks, when Colonel Willoughby sees it, he will have Edgar removed from the college; and his influence over Gilbert is not what it ought to be. Fraser is another David, only not so clever.'

'You have the history of the Octave by heart,' Pennella said. 'How little we thought last year, when the vans were unloaded and we saw lights in the window for the first time, how intimately we were to be associated with them. But I must run home now. Amy will want her tea. It is so difficult sometimes to believe my father is gone, and that I am not going to Manilla Place, but Grove Buildings.'

'Seriously, Pennella,' Frieda said, '*if* I could carry out that scheme, would you consent to it?'

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'I don't think you *will* be able to carry it out,' was the reply; 'and I hardly think I could leave Amy even then.'

The next afternoon, when Frieda was sitting with David, she said suddenly:

'Do you advise me to go away from Aunt Katherine in the spring?'

'Go away!' David said, 'what do you mean?' and the change in his voice startled her.

'I have a plan,' she said, 'of asking my uncle, Mr. Hunter, to pay my expenses at Rome—I mean, those expenses I can't pay for myself—and let me have Pennella Johnstone as a companion. Then I shall ask Aunt Ellen to take Amy, and we would go away for a year or two, and come back really cultivated artists. That is my last dream,' Frieda continued.

'Have you told my mother about it?' David asked.

'No; no one but you. I tell you everything. I feel as if this would be a plan by which I could benefit Pennella and myself also. We both have much to learn, and I have heard that anyone who can copy pictures in Rome, may make a living, and have time for real hard study also. Think what letters I should write to you, David, and how pleased you would be if you saw a picture of mine in the Royal Academy! Tell me honestly what you think of my plan.'

But David did not seem as if he could give an

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opinion; he only said, 'You had better consult my mother;' and then he began to talk of other things.

Frieda thought he was tired, and going nearer the window she began to read him a review of a book which had interested him, till Fraser came in with his violin, and claimed her promise to play over a sonata with him.

To Frieda's astonishment, David said: 'I can't bear the violin here, Fraser; if you must play, play downstairs.'

'The old cracked piano there has not much tone in it,' Fraser said; 'but never mind, that will do.'

'Come over to Heathfield with me, Fraser,' Frieda said; 'and then you can bring Cosy back with you. She is sure to come in after her drive with Aunt Katherine; and Maude is out, I know. So we shall have the piano and the room to ourselves.'

'What's up with David?' Fraser said, as he and Frieda went away together.

'He is tired, I think,' Frieda answered with a sigh, as she began to sound the 'A,' while Fraser tucked his violin under his chin to tune it.

David was left alone in the gathering twilight. Frieda had become a sort of necessity in his life. Surely he would not have to give *her* up also. Must she be taken from him, with all his health and strength? From the very first days of his knowing her, he had felt an unusual interest in her. She

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was older than he was, it is true; but in his case, the two years meant less than it often does. Before the accident, David was a man in maturity of thought, though a boy in the bright joyousness of his nature. His mother, who was his chief friend, always felt David to be separated from Edgar by a great deal more than two years. She confided in him all her hopes and fears, while she never felt Edgar, with all his self-assertion, to be anything but a boy.

And if this had been true of David before his illness, it was doubly true now. Every deep thought and feeling had been deepened by the discipline he had gone through. There was but little of the boy left in him now. His mother often hungered, as she looked at him, for the sound of his elastic step, the ring of his hearty laughter, the fun and merriment which always made his return from school a perfect jubilee to the little ones. All that was past, and Dr. Maunsell, who had examined his papers, had told her only a few days before that her son showed an unusual power of thought, and that he had rarely seen more promise of success than he displayed in the work he had done while lying a prisoner on the sofa.

But Dr. Maunsell had added, 'He is old for his years, and I would not have you encourage this work too much. He should be amused and interested, but not in any way pressed. If he recovers the use of his limbs, or even if he does not do so,

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he will carry all before him, before he is three-and-twenty.'

The books were all shut now, and David lay with wistful eye turned upon the window before him. The western sky was all aglow with the setting sun, which tinged the trees on the Downs, now wearing their autumn tints, with golden glory.

A flock of little clouds lay midway between the horizon and the zenith, and increased in number and beauty every minute. First they were snowy white tipped with gold; then the gold deepened, and a blush came over their soft breasts. As David looked at the beauty of the sky, his thoughts seemed drawn towards the loving Hand of Him Who spreadeth out the heavens like a curtain, and 'cometh walking on the wings of the wind.'

Then there came into the brave boy's soul a message of peace, which seemed to set at rest the earthly longing and the mistrust that had been springing up as a root of bitterness within him.

His mother found him with his eyes closed, and a smile on his face; her entrance awoke him from a light sleep.

'Is that you, mother?'

'Yes, darling; have you thought me a very long time away from you?'

'Oh no,' he said cheerfully; 'I have been employing my time well, in a little nap, since Frieda went off to play a sonata with Fraser. I am afraid

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I was rather gruff to the poor fellow, but that violin does go through me, on days that are not my best days.'

'Has this not been a good day, David?'

'Not quite; Dr. Maunsell's remarks on my papers did not raise my spirits.'

'Why, David! I thought they would delight your father so much, I copied them all out for him. They have raised *my* spirits. I felt so proud of you as I read them.'

'Dear mother!' David said; 'don't you see that whatever I do with my head, there must—yes, I am coming to it as a reality—there must always be my poor helpless body to drag me back, and I shall never be like other people again.'

'That is not a certainty, David; why go out to meet the trouble that may never come? I have good hope.'

'Live in the hope, mother, if it comforts you; and meantime, I get on very well.'

It was always his way to put himself on one side, if he saw that reference to his condition added to his mother's trouble; and he went on in quite his ordinary voice to say:

'Frieda Burnley means to leave Lady Katherine's soon: she has a plan of going to Italy, and taking little Miss Johnstone with her.'

'What is to be done with Amy?'

'Ah! where there is a will there is a way. Amy

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is to be disposed of at Broxholme with the Hunters.'

'I do not think Frieda will be able to carry out that plan,' said Mrs. Willoughby. 'I think she must try to stay quietly where God has appointed her lot—and how we should miss her!'

'Ah! that is it, mother,' David said quickly; 'we are thinking of our own loss rather than of what is good for her. I don't know whether that is right.'

'You are more unselfish than I am, David,' his mother said with a smile, little guessing what it cost him to repeat:

'Of course she must go, if it is for her good, and you must talk to her about it. Have you sealed up your letter for the Indian mail yet?'

'No; I have a few words to add. Shall I enclose anything from you?'

'Here is a scrap,' David said; 'that will tell my father how I am getting on.'

'I have told him that, dear, and how I was sure the news of you would compensate for Gilbert's school report. I am much troubled about Gilbert.'

'I think he will come all right,' said David hopefully; 'he has real good feeling at the bottom, but he is easily led, and thinks so much of himself, poor fellow! Gerard Burnley has not been the best friend for him, but he will see things in a better light some day. When father comes home, it will be all right.'

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'I am always cheered by your view of things, David; how can I be thankful enough to have you preserved to me? But your father's return will be a great relief. The burden is sometimes very heavy.'

'I know that,' said David, with one of his bright, loving glances. 'I know that; and here is the second note of the Octave always out of tune.'

'Ah! you know better, David—it was silent for a time, only to give out a clearer and truer sound than ever before. It was never out of tune.'

'I rather dread my father's coming, though I know it is cowardly. He won't be prepared to find me altogether a cripple.'

Mrs. Willoughby was silent. How often had she rehearsed in her own mind that meeting between the soldier-father and the boy he had left in all the full vigour of youth and health! How often had she tried in her letters to prepare him for David's real condition! But she knew well that the shock, when it came, would be hard for her husband to bear. Presently she said:

'Your father will only remember why it is you are lying here, and look upon this helplessness as we look upon the Victoria Cross, after a deed of valour. Only, David, your badge is a far higher one than that: so take comfort.'

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CHAPTER XXIV.

NEW PATHS.

MR. GEORGE ST. ANDREW BURNLEY took his apprenticeship to Mr. Price very easily. He did not give himself much unnecessary trouble, but his handsome appearance and good-natured manners won him a place in the doctor's esteem. Then he passed his preliminary examination with ease, which Mr. Bigsby said was certainly not surprising in one of the best pupils the academy had ever known. Indeed, all things seemed to conspire to increase George Burnley's satisfaction with that very important person, himself!—and the memory of the past was fading away like a dream.

Frieda's plan for Pennella and herself grew more and more definite; and one day, about a year after her first visit, she found herself in the train on her way to Broxholme again. Aunt Ellen had gladly responded to her proposal, and had told her in a postscript that many friends in Broxholme would give her a hearty welcome.

George met her at the station this time. He had

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grown yet taller, and had all the manner and appearance of a young man. He called a porter to attend to Frieda's luggage, and they were soon in Mr. Price's carriage, which, with some pride, George said the doctor had begged he would use to meet his sister.

George had put Frieda in possession of what news there was to tell before they stopped at the Avenue.

'The old governor has made an awful lot of money lately,' George said, 'and he is talking of retiring from the business and taking a place near Broxholme.'

'Oh, George! I cannot fancy Uncle John in any house but the Avenue, or Aunt Ellen either.'

'Well, do not go and throw cold water on the plan. It will be much better for them to get out of this hole, and live as rich people should live. My uncle is thinking of a place two miles out of the town, "The Chestnuts," and I hope to see him there by March.'

'It will not make much difference to you, will it?'

'Why, yes,' said George; 'I rather think so. I don't mind telling you that whatever the place is, it will be mine when the old people die, and I just keep in with old Price because I promised, you see; but——'

'I am glad you have some sense of what is honourable, George; but I don't like to hear you speak as you do of Uncle and Aunt Hunter.'

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'Oh! I love them well enough, you need not be afraid of that; but there is no harm in speaking of the future.'

'George is what he always was,' thought Frieda; and the sort of sensation which is half pain and half shame came over her, as she remembered her old girlish faith in her brother as all that was noble and good, and one for whom every sacrifice must be made. Women like Frieda cling to ideals to the last, though they are obliged to acknowledge that the ideal is vanished, and a very prosaic reality is left.

'My uncle has not been like himself lately,' George volunteered; 'very sleepy and heavy after dinner. Mr. Price told Aunt Ellen she must watch his diet, and on no account allow him to work after dinner. Indeed, he will have to give up the business soon, and a very good thing it will be on all accounts. Here we are.'

'Not one question about David,' Frieda thought, as the carriage drew up before 8, The Avenue; 'not one inquiry. Is he quite heartless?'

And as if to interpret her thoughts, just as the wheels of the brougham were grating against the pavement, and Aunt Ellen's face was seen above the blind in the dining-room, George said:

'How is Willoughby?'

'Very much the same,' was the reply, 'and I am afraid he will never get well again.'

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'Oh yes! he will. Mr. Price knew an exactly similar case, and——'

But there was no time for more, and in another moment Frieda was clasped in Aunt Ellen's arms.

'So kind of you to come, dear—so very kind! Yes,' nodding to George, 'it is quite right to go back in the carriage to South Street. We shall see you this evening.'

Then Mrs. Hunter encompassed Frieda with loving attentions, and Phœbe and 'the girl' were beaming with delight at her return, while poor old Jip floundered heavily about and gasped out his welcome, and the black cat purred with her tail on end to join in the general expression of pleasure at Frieda's return.

It was pleasant to feel a sense of home-coming, and Frieda remembered how she had looked upon her first visit to Broxholme as a penance which must be endured, and how little she had ever expected to feel as if she had any part or lot with the Hunters—those relations it was rather a misfortune to possess, and who had to be endured as a matter of necessity!

It was easy to see that Mr. Hunter was 'failing.' He had suddenly become an old man, and the after-dinner naps were much prolonged. To Frieda's great surprise, he called her into his little 'private room,' as he termed his study, the evening after her arrival; and, telling her to sit down by his side on one of the large square footstools, he said:

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'My time is short, my dear, and I have a thing or two I should like to say to you. I am glad you came to see your old uncle once more, for I am no hand at writing letters except business ones, and I have several things I want to say.

'The boy George will never make much of a doctor. I'd be loth to trust myself to him, I know; but there is plenty of money for you both. Only, Frieda, my dear, I want you to promise to look after aunt when I'm gone. She is tender-hearted and easy going. Don't let the boy George rule her too much. He is set upon having "a place," as he calls it, and there is a pretty little house, not far from Congle-bury, called "The Chestnuts." It was in the market last week, and I bid for it. I have got it. Not that I mean to leave the Avenue. Here I have lived, and here I mean to die. But it is a home for them that will come after me. And you remember, child, I told you this.'

'Yes, uncle,' said Frieda, but dimly catching his meaning. 'I was going to ask a favour of you; but I hardly like to trouble you now. I will wait till you feel better.'

'No, no; don't do that. Out with it, my dear. There's nothing I would not do for you. I look on you as the peace-maker here, and I love you as I loved your poor mother — ah! and better, I think.'

Frieda laid her head against her uncle's arm,

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hiding her face from him, for she could not restrain her tears.

'Come, come! now, my child, don't fret. I am an old man. And what's a year, more or less? What is it you wish for?'

'I shall be of age if I live till January,' Frieda said, 'and I very much wish to go to Italy to study art with a friend. She is older than I am, and we could quite well go alone. I know I shall have a little money then; and I thought if you could help me a little, it might be managed.'

'I'll pay all expenses. I am glad to do it,' Mr. Hunter said, 'though I can't say I admire foreign parts; and you paint now most wonderful for your age. It couldn't be better.'

'Oh, Uncle John!' Frieda said, laughing; 'I want to learn so much, and my friend, who paints a great deal better than I do, feels the same. She is Miss Johnstone, who took care of George in that sad time.'

'Ah, yes. Well, bygones are bygones. The boy is improved, and aunt is more wrapped up in him than ever. I see no objection to your plan, my dear, except the loss of you. I shall never see you again, for certain. You shall have a cheque all square next January that will take you and Miss Johnstone to Rome—or Jericho, for that matter.'

'There is one other thing connected with my request, Uncle John, but that is more a favour from

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Aunt Ellen. Miss Johnstone has an ailing sister much younger than she is. Her father had a life annuity which died with him, and she has now entirely to maintain herself and this sister. I thought if Amy Johnstone could come to be with Aunt Ellen while we were abroad, it might be an interest for her, and be a real charity.'

'Hum! I am not so sure about this part of the scheme; but talk it over with aunt: and mind this, Frieda—you are not to trouble yourself about pounds, shillings, and pence. There's enough for a dozen such little girls as you are, and to spare. So never trouble your head about it. Now, I wish you'd read a bit to me before supper. I should like to hear your voice reading what your mother used to read from the Bible. That's a Book I've studied too little, and I have been looking for some words which seem to belong to your mother. I can't recall all of them; but it is about an inheritance that will never fade away.'

A few months before, Frieda could not have turned the pages of her Bible with such certainty as to where to find what she sought; but of late, during David Willoughby's illness, she had learned much, as he, reading from his little Greek Testament, would ask her to follow in the English one, and give him a word here and there when he was a little at fault.

She found the chapter in St. Peter's Epistle, and

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read the words so full of hope and comfort, so majestic and yet so simple, so full of meaning and so suggestive, and yet within the comprehension of the simplest and most unlearned:

'Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to His abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you, who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.'

Frieda read on to the end of the chapter, and then, looking up at her uncle, saw that his eyes were fixed on her, as if drinking in every word. The closing words he repeated: '"*Endureth for ever:*" and this life is so short—so short—so soon over! Tell you what, Frieda, I wonder I have worked so hard for money. It's lost labour, my dear.'

'No; do not say that, Uncle John. You have been able to help so many people in need.'

'Ah, but not half so many as I ought to. Well, it will all be in good hands when I am gone; that I know well. Now aunt will be getting fidgety at our talking together so long. You do your best, my dear, to make her accustomed to the thought of my going. You see, she is so tender-hearted that I can't talk to her much—she begins to cry, and that up-

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sets us both. God bless you, my dear!' he added, kissing Frieda again and again.

She did not shrink from his loud kisses now, as she had once done. She had learned to see the true worth of her uncle's character shining through the rough exterior, and she reproached herself, as so many of us have often had to reproach ourselves, for our harsh and ignorant judgments of others. We are all too prone to look only at the outside, and if that is fair, and, as we say, 'refined,' we pass over the signs of the want of really good manners, which are too often a marked feature of those who in dress and external surroundings and social position are allowed to stand on a vantage-ground, whence they can look down on those whom they consider beneath them, and practise small discourtesies without a word of remonstrance. I think there never was a time when what is called 'society' needed reform in these matters more.

Pretension in art and literature has full sway. It is seen in what is known as æsthetic taste. Rooms show it, where everything is ruled by a certain canon, and any word of doubt as to the beauty or appropriateness of a spindle-legged chair, or Chippendale is merely treated with lofty contempt. It is seen in dress, where ugliness is decreed to be 'right.' Children are disguised by very short frocks, and very heavy, wide hats, and no appear against them must be made. Æsthetic taste de-

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mands the sacrifice to comfort and beauty, and it must be made.

Nor, I fear, does this pretension stop at things which, if judged *only* as externals, are not of such very great importance. But in what is called 'religion' the same spirit is abroad. The outside of things is fought for, in an ignoble and unseemly strife, and the real gold is buried under the wood, hay, and stubble of man's inventions and hankering after 'show.' All comes from the same source. The spring must be pure before the fountain is sweet; the root must have struck deep or the plant will wither. Our aim must be simple—to *be*, and not to seem: and then 'pretension' will vanish from amongst us, and we shall have a 'society' in which the flower of Christian charity can flourish, and not as now, often be hidden from sight by the tall and garish weeds flaunting their heads with the air of superiority which deceives many—and then we may hope to see our children, as the true King's daughters, polished corners of the temple—'all glorious *within*.'

Mrs. Hunter was at first very doubtful about receiving Amy Johnstone; but, to Frieda's surprise, George thought it would be a good plan, and therefore Mrs. Hunter soon began to 'come round' to the idea.

'I should like to be of use and help Miss John stone, who was so good to George,' she said; 'but

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I never have had to do with a nervous invalid, and I hope she will not refuse food. It makes me miserable when people don't eat. I like to see them hearty, and enjoying their meals.'

'Well, I dare say Amy will be quite another person here,' George said. 'She really is not so bad, she has been a beauty, and is sure to get fond of you, Aunt Ellen.'

Poor Mrs. Hunter felt the tide was against her, and Frieda returned to Valehead full of her plan, and rather proud that she had carried her point. Lady Katherine heard of the scheme with a sense of relief; Frieda's artistic powers suddenly became much more wonderful in her eyes, and it was quite right that she should use every means of cultivating them.

Amy Johnstone was delighted with the idea of change, and Pennella could but acknowledge that the prospect held out to her was one which seemed to realize the dreams of years. Preparations went on, and were a great interest to everyone concerned.

The two artists were to take up their abode in Rome with a lady who received young students, and gave them every opportunity of doing their work in the studios of masters as well as in the galleries. Pennella Johnstone forgot nothing, and the Queen's Court people were for the time handed over to a friend; while Nelly, who had improved so much under Miss Johnstone's teaching, was to take the

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place of 'a girl' in the Hunters' house at Broxholme.

The portraits of Mrs. Willoughby and Cosy had been finished, and were despatched to India in time for Christmas, and David's own portrait had prospered so well that it was considered Frieda's best work. All things seemed in a satisfactory state of progress; and Frieda, full of animation and the excitement of preparation, did not notice that there was one face which had something less and less of gladness in it every day—that David, though he listened to all her hopes and aspirations, never seemed to kindle into any real interest in them.

It was on her twenty-first birthday that she was sitting in her old place by his side with the book in her hand waiting for him to begin. But he did not open the Greek lexicon: and presently said:

'No lessons on your birthday. Everyone has a holiday then.'

'Let me go on to the last,' she said; 'there is only a week left. David, do you think I am right to go away?' she asked suddenly. 'I wish you would talk to me about the journey, and all we are to see and do, as everyone else does. I have a feeling that you are vexed with me.'

'Put that feeling away, then. I am not a bit vexed, as you call it; but—' he hesitated, 'it is not easy to be altogether unselfish.

'Will you want me so much, David?' Frieda

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asked. 'Cara will do what I have done; and now you are really so much better you will soon be quite independent. The doctors say you are so decidedly better.'

David smiled rather a sad smile.

'What they say is not of so much importance, Frieda. I can't say I *feel* much better; that is, I am perfectly well in health, but as to standing or walking, or even sitting up, I do not believe I could do it if a kingdom depended on it.'

'I think you will find the power will return when you are allowed to use your limbs. But, David, when I am with you I always wish I were not going to Rome with Pennella Johnstone. You are the only one I care for, about the plan who has misgivings. Aunt Katherine is delighted to get rid of me—she cannot hide it; Maude does not care very much about it one way or the other; your mother thinks that every gift we have bestowed on us by God should be cultivated to the utmost, and she thinks that poor Pennella will, with the study abroad, be really able to earn a comfortable living. So I am doing *her* a kindness, David: and there is some chance that Amy may behave better at Broxholme, and Aunt Ellen is quite pleased; and then there is dear old Uncle John, so delighted to do this for us; and then, lastly, there is myself, David; I *do* love to think of seeing Rome, and Florence, and working happily with Pennella, and

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living a free life instead of a life which was a burden to others. Oh, David, I wish you would say something about it!'

It was hard to believe that Frieda was David's senior at all times, and now she was speaking like an impulsive child, who was almost asking for patience, if not forgiveness, of some one much older than herself.

'Yes,' she repeated vehemently, 'I *do* wish you would even say you did not approve of my going to Italy. Anything is better than silence, and changing the subject whenever I mention it. It is that which I find so hard to bear. You used to speak plainly enough to me in those old days when I was so unhappy about George; and now——' Frieda's voice faltered.

'Dear Frieda,' David said, putting out his hand to her, 'I think there are two sides to this picture, as to every other. I can't speak about myself, because I shall miss you so much; but I am never quite sure how it will be, when we choose exactly what we wish, and do it. It is safer to let the good, or what we fancy good, come to us, not go out of the way to look for it.

'But, David, this would never have come to me, and I am pleasing other people as well as myself—Uncle John, who was always wanting to give me something; Pennella, whose life of self-sacrifice has never left her any time to think of herself, and of

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really improving in her art; and in *all* ways it is a good for everybody.'

But Frieda could get nothing more definite from David, though he talked about all she would see and all she would do, and she promised to keep a journal and send it to him.

Lady Katherine had a party in honour of Frieda's twenty-first birthday, and was smiling and gracious. All the Willoughbys except the little boys and Cosy were invited, and Frieda was half-amused, half-irritated, to hear herself spoken of as 'My dear niece, who is tempted to leave me to spend a year amongst the glories of the Italian cities; and I doubt not the result of her studies will be a leading picture in the Grosvenor Gallery.'

Then Miss Johnstone was spoken of as a travelling companion and chaperone of a certain age, and the whole thing was so coloured by Lady Katherine's 'highly decorative' descriptive powers that the impression left was, that Frieda was leaving an aunt who was devoted to her, and that it was rather a pity that she should undertake such an expedition with little Miss Johnstone.

When at last the good-byes were all said at Heathfield and St. Winifred's, Frieda found there was yet much to get through. It was no easy task to transplant Amy to Broxholme. The journey really tried her very much, and she arrived at the Avenue in a querulous, half-weeping condition, which

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was not the best omen for the future. Then Nelly, on the second day of her arrival, broke one of Mrs. Hunter's lily pattern blue china plates, and naturally received a sharp reprimand from both mistress and maid.

Pennella was silent and grave, and Frieda had the uneasy sense of being the responsible person for all the difficulties which had arisen out of her plan. Is it not always so? The path which we mark out for ourselves, and wreathe about with the flowers of imagined happiness, proves productive of many brambles and thorns, and to be rough for the feet where we expected only smoothness and delight.

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CHAPTER XXV.

THE NEW ORDER.

IT was a cold March day of black east wind, with a drizzling rain, when Frieda Burnley set foot on English ground, after three years' absence. The contrast between the cold North and the sunny South was very marked; and having left behind her flowers and sunshine, brilliant colouring, and soft airs, filled with the subtle fragrance of orange groves and violets, the barren dreariness of the country between Folkestone and London was anything but like a welcome to her fatherland.

It must be confessed that, on a March day like this, dear old England wears her least inviting aspect.

'The wind is enough to cut your head off,' an old gentleman remarked, as he struggled into Frieda's carriage, with a mountain of rugs, his eyes only appearing over a huge comforter, which, if it kept out the cold, shortened his breathing, and made him gasp like a walrus. 'Terribly biting wind,' he said; 'it has been trying to rain for

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the last twenty-four hours, and can't manage it. Phew!'

Frieda shuddered.

'It is fearfully cold,' she said. And then she wondered if the old gentleman had any weight at his heart which made the cold to him, as it did to her, but a secondary trouble, and only another element in a condition of things which was anything but cheerful. For Frieda had been summoned by a telegram to return at once to Broxholme. Mr. Hunter's long condition 'of failing' had ended very suddenly; he had died three days before, in his sleep. So much the telegram had told, but no more; and yet Frieda knew there was a great deal more to hear and to learn when she arrived at Broxholme. She had felt that all things were not so serene at Broxholme as she had been led to believe. Mr. Hunter had been persuaded by George to remove to the little place near Broxholme, and 'The Chestnuts' was now Frieda's destination. George was master there of his aunt and his uncle, and having long ago given up 'medicine,' was reigning as the 'young squire;' though he was obliged to put in an attendance at the much-disliked office in Broxholme for form's sake, Mr. Hunter still receiving a very large share of the business profits.

Frieda had stayed on at Rome and Florence with Pennella, with a sense of delight in her art, and a misgiving about herself in remaining so long abroad,

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which had kept up within her one of those 'wars' between two opposite desires and wishes that most of us who know anything of self-examination understand.

'I am right to use the gifts God has given me,' she would often say to Pennella, who had worked to so much purpose in copying pictures that she was rapidly saving enough money to enable her to think of returning to England, to make a home for Amy.

Meanwhile, Amy was perfectly contented. She never expressed any wish to see her sister. She was petted and indulged by Mrs. Hunter, who never could help spoiling everyone who depended on her and was capable of being spoiled. It was a weak sort of indulgence, which had worked mischief with George, and was now equally unwholesome for Amy; but it was a weakness that was so amiable that, though it grew with years, no one could protest against it.

Mrs. Hunter's tender heart went forth to the querulous, selfish invalid; and as she could not have Frieda to pet and indulge, she accepted Amy Johnstone in her place, and had spent her time in ministering to her, and Mr. Hunter, ever since they removed to 'The Chestnuts.' George was so entirely master of the occasion that he was beyond the reach of her indulgence. He kept his own interests so well to the front, and indulged himself so

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much, there was literally nothing to be done for him.

As the fly from the station wound along the road towards the village of Conglesbury, Frieda's heart sank within her. There would be no hearty welcome from her generous old uncle; nothing to do for him to show she was grateful; nothing to be done for him any more. 'I ought to have lived with him. I ought to have come back when I had that last letter from Aunt Ellen. Oh, it is too late now! David was right: he thought I was making a mistake when I first left Aunt Katherine. And yet, if it were all to come over again, I believe I should not be able to resist doing the same.'

As Frieda thought thus, the fly turned in at a large iron gate, which stood open, and rumbled up a smooth gravel drive to the door of a pretty, many-gabled house, of no particular style of architecture, though uniting a good many in its small way. All the blinds were drawn down, and the servant who opened the door looked very solemn. 'A man-servant!' Frieda thought, 'how things are changed.'

There was no Aunt Ellen coming out to meet her now, no neat maid-servant Phœbe, waiting to take her bag. Very solemnly the man led her to the door of the library. The next minute she found herself clasped in her aunt's embrace.

'Frieda, Frieda, my dear child! he wanted to see you once more.'

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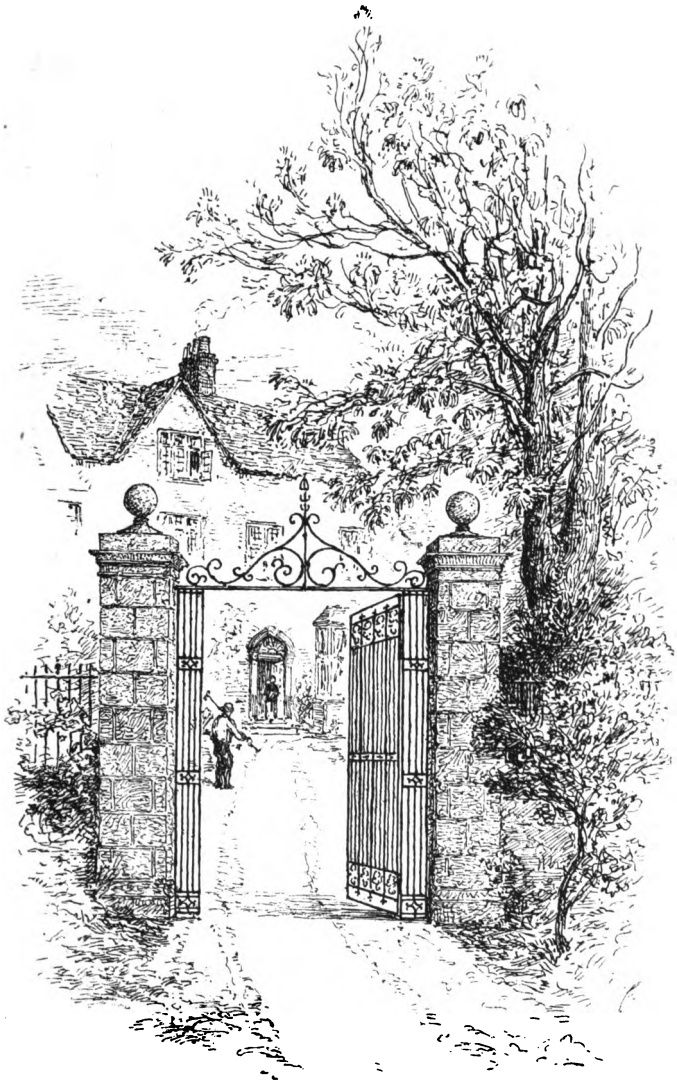

THE CHESTNUTS.

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'Oh! why did you never tell me to come? why did you not send for me?'

'He would not let me; he thought that you could not leave your painting, but——'

She stopped, for George now appeared. He spoke in a subdued, quiet tone as he greeted his sister; but had about him all the air of the master as he said he would ring for Phœbe to show her to her room, and added that Amy Johnstone would like to see her.

'Aunt Ellen cannot bear much excitement,' he said, in the same low, repressed voice. 'She must be kept very quiet.'

'I want Frieda; I want to tell her all,' poor Mrs. Hunter wailed. 'George, don't take her away from me.'

'Frieda has been travelling night and day, Aunt Ellen,' George said; 'she will like to rest;' and then he held the door open for Frieda to pass him, in a manner which was unmistakable.

Frieda's room was on the first floor, at the top of the staircase, and George ushered her in, saying:

'It is a nice house, you see. I will ring for a servant to light a fire. I hope you will be comfortable.'

'Oh, George, George! I cannot think of the house: I am only thinking of our good, kind uncle, to whom we have been so ungrateful.'

'Ungrateful! nonsense! he was quite happy, poor old man! he wanted for nothing. There has been

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nothing to vex him of late; he got quite used to things.'

'When was it?' Frieda asked, sobbing.

'On Sunday evening. We thought he was asleep in the library—he always took a nap after dinner—we dine at half-past seven; and when Aunt Ellen went to him with a cup of coffee, he was dead.'

'There,' he said, turning to Phœbe, who now appeared—'light the fire, and attend to Miss Burnley. Perhaps you would like your tea sent up here, Frieda.'

But Frieda could only sink down exhausted and self-reproachful.

'I would rather be alone, George,' she said; 'it is all so sad.'

'Yes, indeed, miss, it is sad,' said Phœbe. 'I do believe the poor dear master might have lived longer, if he hadn't been routed out of his old habits. We are all so mighty grand now; and, if it were not for my dear mistress, I should not stay, I can tell you, Miss Frieda. The dear master was very partial to you, miss; and was so proud of that picture you sent last Christmas. He had it hung before his bed, and took everyone up into his room to see it.'

'When and where is the funeral to be?' Frieda asked.

'The day after to-morrow, at the Cemetery. There! I will go and get you a cup of tea, and

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that will do you good, for you look weary and tired out.'

There is nothing more perplexing than the apparent success of those who, as we say, little deserve it.

That the selfish and self-indulgent ones should have their hearts' desire, and the unselfish earnest workers should often, as it seems, be toilers in vain, and spending their strength for nought, puzzles us. But there are keys for the solution of this problem, as for many others, and it is to be found if we look for it in the right way.

There can be no doubt that the selfish seekers after happiness never find it. They are chasing a shadow, and what looks to us as the substance is after all something which cannot be grasped; while all who have had any experience of life can bear witness to the reality of the happiness which is entirely apart from any selfish aim.

It comes to us unawares, in the very thick of the battle; it is the foretaste of the future; it is as the drop from the heavenly water-springs, the draught from the fountain which is the outcome of that peace which flows like a river, and 'maketh glad the city of our God.'

Light and colour can only come from the sun: and it is safe to say that all things which can brighten life with any real happiness must come from Him Who is our Sun and Shield.

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But the problem, rather than the solution of it, pressed on Frieda heavily during the next few days.

George seemed so completely to have gained what he wanted, with no trouble or exertion. Amy Johnstone also was living a life which suited her; and though she grumbled still, and lamented over Pennella's absence, and sighed over imaginary sorrows, she was on the whole more amenable than when Pennella was working for her support, and perhaps also a little more grateful.

It seemed to Frieda that the two days before the funeral would never end, and it was very hard to realize the hope of immortality in a home wholly given up to the utmost pomp and circumstance of mourning. The lawyer and doctor's manner a little puzzled Frieda: they were both deferential to her. So was the great Mr. Bigsby, and others also who came to the funeral.

It was over at last, and Frieda's wreath of white flowers had been the only ray of brightness in the gloom. She had carried it to the grave, and dropped it on the coffin, with many tender and grateful thoughts of the kind friend who was gone for ever. Much that Mrs. Hunter told her of the last years was comforting.

'He never let a day pass without reading the Bible, and he used to make me sit with him, and go over the hymns he liked best. He was so patient:

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and when we removed here, he took all the alterations without a murmur.'

'They ought never to have been made,' Frieda said; 'it was too inconsiderate.'

'Oh no, dear, no; it is quite natural the young should wish for what money can bring, and of course dear George likes to have things as other young men have them. We must remember that.'

'Always the same thing,' Frieda thought, 'excusing him and trying to make others excuse him. A different treatment might have answered better; but it is too late now.'

'I must go to Valehead for a few days, Aunt Ellen, for I have heard from Aunt Katherine that she would like to see me: and my friends the Willoughbys are also anxious that I should pay them a visit.'

But you will come back here, dear; do not leave me. You will not go back to Rome?' Mrs. Hunter pleaded.

'No; my work there is over, I think,' Frieda said. 'Pennella and I had intended to return to England after Easter; and Pennella has been so very successful that she is able now to make a home for Amy.'

'I shall not like to part with Amy; she is very trying at times, but she fills up a want in my life, and will do so more and more now I have lost *him*. I like to feel somebody wants me still, and depends on me, dear. George is so independent, and you are so clever and strong; but poor Amy is often like a

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child, and your dear uncle used to say she was not fit to rough it in life. I think I should like to keep Amy, if George does not object; for he will be master here.'

'He will do all you wish, let us hope,' said Frieda; 'and you will always be mistress of this house.'

Mrs. Hunter shook her head.

'I care very little about that now,' she said. 'Now I have lost him, the interest of my life is over. I don't feel as if I could ever look after the house again, and I used to be so pleased to keep the furniture bright and fresh.'

The wailing tone went to Frieda's heart, and it seemed so difficult to say anything by way of comfort.

They were sitting together in Mrs. Hunter's room on the afternoon of the funeral day, when George came in.

'The will is to be read now, Aunt Ellen, in the library. Will you come? And, Frieda, you can come also, if you like.'

'Of course Frieda must come, dear George,' Mrs. Hunter said, putting her hand in George's arm and going slowly downstairs. 'It will be better not to tell Amy Johnstone, though I am afraid she will be a little hurt, though she is not a relation.'

Mr. Smart, the lawyer, was seated at the library-table, with the papers open before him; and when Mrs. Hunter came in, he rose, and motioned to

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George to place her on his right hand. The doctor, Mr. Price, and Mr. Bigsby were the only other people present.

The will was worded after the fashion of such documents, the multiplication of words rendering the meaning very hard to catch by the uninitiated; and it was with a shock like one awakening from a dream that Frieda heard Mr. Smart say:

'You understand, Mr. Burnley, that at your aunt's death you inherit this house and all the plate, linen, and furniture, with a legacy of £10,000.'

George bowed. His face did not show so much satisfaction as astonishment.

'I thought——' he began; but Mr. Smart went on, going over the list of legacies without the formula of 'I give and bequeath' the second time.

'Miss Burnley is entitled to receive a sum of £10,000 at once, and a further bequest of £10,000 at Mrs. Hunter's death. To Mr. David Willoughby is left the sum of £5,000.'

'David—David Willoughby!' Frieda exclaimed.

'You heard what was appended to that legacy: "In consideration of the injury he received in his courageous efforts to save the life of my nephew, George Burnley."'

'I had never dreamed of anything like that,' Frieda said. 'How just! how noble!'

George bit his lip, and the colour came to his face.

'David Willoughby is——' He stopped, for the

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ungenerous thought, he felt, would find no favour with those around him.

There were legacies to Mr. Bigsby, Mr. Price, each of the servants, and the Hospital and Dispensary at Broxholme.

The house in the Avenue was left to Frieda, and a small legacy in money to Amy and Pennella Johnstone.

Never had a will been better considered, never one which had been framed on more equitable principles.

Only one person was disappointed, and that person was George. He had so fully expected to be master of 'The Chestnuts;' and he had never dreamed of bequests to Frieda and David Willoughby.

He was prepared to be *kind* to Frieda, to give her a home, and put every advantage in her way; but except for the possession of 'The Chestnuts' at his aunt's death, Frieda was really as well off as he was!

'I ought to have been treated as he promised—as his only son,' he said to Amy Johnstone; 'but since he took such a fancy to Frieda there has been a change. However, I don't wish to grumble.'

'Indeed, George, you have reason to grumble,' said Amy. 'I never did like the way your sister slipped in here—never. But never mind, you are master of this house; and while your aunt lives, everything will go smoothly. I am sure I hope

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Pennella won't take me away. I could not bear to leave dear Mrs. Hunter.'

'Oh, that will be all right, I dare say,' said George indifferently; for though ready to air his own grievances, he never had much sympathy for other people's. 'My uncle might have trusted me to be kind to everyone, but it is hardly fair to provide for a stranger like Willoughby.'

'No, indeed; for I hear he is quite well. I wish *I* were as strong.'

Amy sighed, and, throwing herself back in her luxurious armchair, opened one of her favourite books. George stood looking out of the window for a few minutes, and then left her to her novel and sauntered down into Broxholme, to find out what was thought of the will at the office.

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CHAPTER XXVI.

THE SUDDEN CHANGE.

THE spring sunshine was flooding the bay-window of the drawing-room at St. Winifred's, Downside Park, with glory, and in a chair with a reading-table fitted to it sat David Willoughby.

The house was very quiet, for Cara and Cosy were gone out, and all the boys were at school—all except Edgar, who had been removed by his father's order—and it must be confessed by the Head-master's desire. He had been sent to a relation of his father's in a West India sugar-plantation, and the accounts of him now proved the wisdom of the decision. Gilbert had been much more amenable and industrious since he had left home; and Fraser was rapidly rising in the college, and preparing for his examination for Woolwich; while the younger boys were doing well in the preparatory school. David had with wonderful perseverance worked on in all branches, classical and mathematical, and was now longing to get to Oxford as an unattached student. How deep the longing was

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no one guessed; like all David's feelings, it lay out of sight. He saw his mother often weighed down with care, and of late the letters from Colonel Willoughby had not been cheerful. His health had suffered from repeated attacks of fever, which, although not severe, had been frequent; and he spoke of coming home on leave, if not of resigning his commission. All this clouded the sky of home with anxiety, and David determined to add nothing to the weight which lay heavily on his mother. Still there were hours of depression when he had to fight the battle, as it seemed, all over again, with the longing to be as active and vigorous as his brother, or as Gerald Burnley, who lounged about, handsome and idle, with a pipe or a cigar in his mouth, talking of his Oxford life, and the enjoyments there, and making pleasure the aim of his existence.

He had just left him this afternoon, and his stories of university life had filled poor David's soul with a longing to show what he would do, if he had only Gerald's advantages.

Gerald's way of amusing him always depressed him; but he now roused himself from his reverie, reproached himself with discontent and ingratitude, and, taking his stick in his hand, went across the room to get the writing-case and began a letter to Frieda.

For all through these years there had been a

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regular correspondence between them. Frieda's letters were full of Rome and art, and her delight in feeling herself making way towards the desired end. Not a picture she copied but David knew about it; not a study of her own but he entered into it, and had rough sketches sent him of her 'thoughts' long before they were put on canvas.

Mrs. Willoughby had watched this correspondence with some misgivings. She dreaded lest her brave son should have yet another trial, greater than any that had gone before; and yet, wiser than many mothers would have been in like circumstances, she preserved a 'golden silence,' and read Frieda's letters, and remarked on them as on those of any ordinary person.

Lady Katherine had sometimes said in a half-sarcastic, half-reproachful voice to David, 'I come to you for news of Frieda;' but he never betrayed any particular surprise or emotion, as he answered, that he heard regularly from Frieda, and that her letters were always full of interest. Lady Katherine had long ago made Mrs. Willoughby a 'grumbling block' for all her vexations about Gerald, which were many, and about Maude, which were more serious.

Poor Maude had captivated Arthur Collingwood, and chose to consider herself engaged to him; while her mother, when questioned, denied that she knew anything of it; and David secretly wondered

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at his friend's infatuation. What could a man who had to make his way in the world do, with a pretty girl who had never been accustomed to help herself in any way, but was wholly dependent on Thompson for everything?

But Arthur Collingwood, like most other young men in his position, would take no advice; and though sensible and clever, was completely fascinated by Maude, and loved her with all the strength of his nature.

'How is it that he can be so foolish?' David would say to Cara; and Cara would reply with her usual common-sense: 'Because everyone, however good and clever, must have a weak point; and Maude is Arthur Collingwood's.' And Cara added, 'I dare say you are no exception to the rule.'

'Perhaps not,' David said sharply; and then the subject was dismissed.

There are times when all our little vexations, worries, and disappointments rise up in an army before us; and through the mist of a depressed condition of mind and body, they assume an unnatural size and importance.

It was so to-day with David; and amongst other fears and dreads was that of the first meeting with his father. Even now he stood leaning on his sticks, opposite the mirror which hung at the end of the room, and considered the reflection he saw there—that of a tall, thin man, looking

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much older than his twenty-one years, with a figure which was a little bent, and drooped on the left side.

'A cripple!' he said; and then, with a smile which illuminated his face, he added: 'But with plenty of work left in him.'

He was standing thus, when the door opened, and a tall man, who was the very impersonation of a soldier, with a beard streaked with grey, and a pair of keen dark eyes, came in.

'Father!'

Colonel Willoughby seemed to have no word at command to express what he felt. His lithe, active boy changed in three years to a man, bearing the traces of a conflict greater than he had expected. The change in his face was more striking than the change in his figure. There was a light in it, and a resolute steadfastness, which gave it a nobleness greater than is seen in the hero of a hundred fights.

'Father!' David repeated, misunderstanding the sudden pause. 'Am I so much altered?'

'My brave boy!' Colonel Willoughby said; 'thank God I find you as you are! Your mother may well be proud of you. Your poor mother—where is she?'

'She will be here soon. She is gone out with Cara and Cosy.'

'The first and last note of the Octave,' his father

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said, laughing. 'Well, I think they are all in pretty good tune now.'

'Yes,' David said. 'The last news of Edgar is capital; he has got a salary, and the other boys are all right. Mother is——'

'The one to be anxious about. So I thought. That is why I would not telegraph from Southampton. She has always an aversion to those dark orange-coloured envelopes. Even now I am afraid it will be something of a shock for her to see me. I suppose I look quite the old man, David; but I am a great deal better since I started homeward; then I hardly knew whether I should ever live to see you all again.'

'Here is mother!' David exclaimed; and he went quickly across the room to the door, as his mother was heard ascending the steep steps.

His father's eyes followed him with a wistful affection.

'Poor fellow! and yet why should I pity him? he has got the true courage of the soldier.'

'Mother,' David said, 'there is good news of my father; he is better—he is nearly well—and——'

David stopped, for Cara had caught sight of the tall figure in the doorway of the drawing-room, and had thrown herself into his arms with a cry of 'Father, father!'

There was an arrival at Heathfield the same evening, but Frieda had announced her coming by a letter.

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It was chilling to find no one at home but Thompson to greet her.

'Did Aunt Katherine get my letter?' she asked.

'Oh yes, my dear Miss Frieda; but she was engaged to dine with Miss Maude at a relation of Lord Smallborough's, who is staying in Valehead; and I was to say she hoped you would find everything comfortable, and not wait up if you were tired. So the old gentleman at Broxholme is dead,' Thompson added.

'Yes; my best friend, Thompson,' Frieda exclaimed sadly.

'Ah! poor old gentleman! I never could bear to hear him scorned here. Well, here is your dinner ready; and if you go upstairs, you'll find your old room. You are a great deal changed, Miss Frieda.'

'We none of us grow younger, Thompson.'

'No, that's true: though some of us try to *think* we do,' Thompson said significantly. 'There's great news over the way. The Colonel came home this afternoon.'

'Oh! I *am* glad to hear it; it *is* good news! And how are they all?'

'Mrs. Willoughby has not been the same since Mr. Edgar went away, though it was all done for the best; and I could name some one else who would be the better for a little roughing it. But there, I must not judge, though I do like to see sons and daughters paying their mother respect. Mr. David walks with

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a stick; but he is well, I think, in other ways—so nurse says. He is as near perfect in her eyes as anyone could be, and I don't wonder. I am surprised Mr. George never came here. I suppose he waited to be asked.'

'Mrs. Willoughby has asked him, but perhaps it was as well he should refuse. Yes, I will go to my old room. Has anyone used it since I left it?'

'No one, Miss Frieda. There's your easel and your pictures just as you left them; nothing is altered. Her ladyship seldom mounts so high, and I have taken care to have nothing meddled with.'

'Thank you,' Frieda said; and then she went up to her old room, whither her box had preceded her, and looked across to the windows of St. Winifred's, as she had done on that evening so long ago now, when she had watched Cara's figure shadowed on the blind.

There was no shadow now, for the window of that room was open, and through it she could hear the voices of the children, and little Cosy singing the song, with its musical refrain:

'And all the little waves had their night-caps on,
Their night-caps, white caps, night-caps on;
And all the little waves had their night-caps on,
So very, very early in the morning.'

'She is singing it to her father, dear little Cosy! They little think I am so near,' Frieda thought—'so near, and alone.'

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And then her thoughts went over the past years, and she could recall all she had felt and struggled for in that familiar room. Her mistaken view of her brother, and the hard lesson which the vanishing of her ideal had taught her; so hard and so bitter had it been that she could almost pity herself now, as she thought of it. And then came tenderer memories of David and the Willoughbys, of all that she had learned from Mrs. Willoughby of the true meaning of life.

'Whatever is before me,' Frieda thought, 'I have something to hold by now. It is as Pennella said in her letter yesterday—"We do but row; Another steers the bark:" and we know that *Other* is a good and safe Pilot, so that we shall not make shipwreck if we trust Him: and I can trust Him now. I wonder if they would think me intrusive if I went over there after dinner? And there is the news about Uncle John's legacy to David: I wonder if it has reached them. Lawyers always communicate such news, I suppose.'

It was strange how very small a part of Frieda's meditations was given to her own position in the future, as heir to a large part of her uncle's wealth. The distant had faded out for the time, and the near, not the far off, occupied her.

She went down to her solitary dinner in the well-remembered room, and ate so little that Thompson, who insisted on waiting on her, was quite disappointed.

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'You are very kind,' Frieda repeated, 'but I am not hungry.'

'You feel lonely, that is what it is. Why don't you go over and see Mrs. Willoughby? They would be pleased enough to see you, you may depend upon it.'

'I hardly like to go; they will want to spend Colonel Willoughby's first evening alone together.'

As she spoke, the sound of a stick tapping up the steps made Thompson exclaim:

'That's Mr. David! I thought those maids here would never be able to resist running over to tell the servants at St. Winifred's you were come home.'

In a moment Frieda was in the little hall, and face to face with David Willoughby.

'Oh, come in!' she said. 'I am so glad to see you.'

Thompson preceded them to the drawing-room, and lighted the gas, which fell upon David's face, and made Frieda exclaim:

'You are so much grown; I am scarcely up to your shoulder.'

'Grown and aged!' he said. 'You are, on the contrary, grown backwards. You look——' he stopped, and then added, with something like a sigh, 'so well.'

'I am well, and much happier than in old times; but let us sit down and have a good talk. Your father has come home, I hear.'

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'Yes, and I want you to come and make the eighth note of the Octave—will you?'

'I have something to tell you first,' she said. 'My uncle, John Hunter, has left you a legacy.'

'Left *me* a legacy!' David exclaimed in astonishment.

'Yes; I thought the lawyers might have written, but I suppose they will not do so officially just yet. Uncle John has left you five thousand pounds!'

'I cannot understand why he should do it,' David said simply, 'unless it is—because he guessed that I cared more for you than anything in the world.'

The brightest colour came to Frieda's face, as she said eagerly:

'You must know better; it is expressly stated in the will that it was a small acknowledgment of your courageous efforts to save George's life.'

Then there was a pause—rather an awkward pause—and Frieda broke it.

'Shall I get my hat and come back with you to see them all?' she said. 'Won't they be glad to hear about Uncle John's legacy, David?'

His name uttered by her seemed to rouse him.

'You must not come till you have heard my story; it will be very kind if you can listen to it patiently; it won't take very long to tell. But it would not be right to let you come, without telling it first.'

Surely no tale of love was ever better told, with all the dignity of his young manhood, with no as-

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sumption or self-assertion, and yet with a touching and pathetic simplicity, as he went over all the disadvantages for her which must be taken into account.

'Those three years,' he said, 'have made me much older than three ordinary years of a man's life would have done; thus I think the small disparity between us is in reality done away with. I am to all intents and purposes much older than you are. This noble legacy of your uncle's will give me all I need now, and more than all when once I have taken my degree. I am not afraid of the future, for I think I have a moderate chance of success. The fact remains, however, that I am lame, and can never hope to be anything else. It is for you, Frieda, to put this and all my many shortcomings in the balance, with a love that is a very part of my being, which dates back to a twilight walk over the Downs long ago, which has strengthened from that time, and is, I think, built on a sure foundation: for I have taken it where I take all my best things, and I feel God has blessed it for me, whether you come to me or whether you cannot come as my wife.'

Frieda had risen, and stood with her hands clasped, gazing at the face which his great love for her had illuminated and made beautiful. She stood, as many before her have stood, on the brink of a great change—the change which sometimes, though rarely, touches the friendship and sisterly affection

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of a true woman, into love. The entire revulsion of feeling is always a shock that is half pain and half joy. If Frieda had seen David every day in the closeness of near neighbourhood, as in times past, for these three years, it might have been different. Then, indeed, some word or look might and probably would have betrayed him; but as it was, he had so carefully guarded his letters, and had been so jealous of any word that might put a stop to the correspondence which was one of the brightest spots of his life. Thus Frieda was taken by surprise, scarcely so much by finding that David loved her, as that she loved him.

There was a long silence, and at last David spoke again:

'Do not answer me now; I can wait.'

Then she drew a little nearer to him, and put both her hands on his shoulders, as he sat in Lady Katherine's especial chair.

'You need not wait; I owe you so much. What have you not taught me by your words, and far, far more by your life? You need not wait; I am ready to come to you.'

'You have counted the cost?' he said. 'You are sure you have no misgivings, Frieda—*my* Frieda?'

'Misgivings! How can I be anything but proud and thankful?' she said, bowing her head upon his, and struggling in vain to repress a flood of happy tears.

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Then, after a few minutes' pause, he said:
'Let us go and tell my mother.'

When Lady Katherine came home about eleven o'clock, she found Frieda alone in the drawing-room. She had just returned from St. Winifred's. Lady Katherine was not in the most serene frame of mind, for Maude was in high spirits. Mr. Collingwood had been invited to the party; he had taken her in to dinner, and she had made no secret of her intentions before those from whom her mother still hoped to hide what she persisted in calling 'her child's infatuation.' Poor Lady Katherine was reaping a bitter harvest for her indulgence of Maude, and Frieda was struck with the sad and disappointed air of weariness with which she threw herself into her chair, her beautiful heliotrope satin dress falling in artistic folds about her, diamonds flashing on her fingers and in her head-dress, and her face pinched, and worn, and aged.

'Well, Frieda, so you have come at last; when did you arrive? I am sorry I had to dine out. I am sure I wish I had refused the invitation.'

'How well you look, old Frieda!' Maude said, throwing her arms round her cousin. 'Really that plain style of dress is most becoming. But I forgot you are in mourning for the poor old provision merchant. We began to think you were going to live at Rome, and end by marrying an Italian prince.'

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So Maude rattled on. She looked very brilliant and pretty in her pale pink dress with a wreath of wild roses in her hair — that golden hair which Arthur Collingwood had admired so much, as it floated on her back in the days of the proposed concert at St. Winifred's. It was curled and crimped now all over her head, and lay in waves, by the help of crimping-pins, upon her white forehead.

'Well,' Maude said, 'I am tired, and must hear all your news in the morning. I will leave you and mother together: perhaps you may put her into a better mood. *Mood*, mumsie, *mood*—I did not say temper;' and with a kiss on her mother's cheek, Maude fluttered away.

'Oh, Frieda! that child is breaking my heart. I had set my hopes on her, so pretty as she is and so much admired; and she persists in an absurd fancy for a young man who has scarcely a penny in the world—that young Collingwood who was a friend of David Willoughby's when they were boys together. What with Maude's perverse folly, and Gerald's behaviour—he is out now at some smoking-party, and will not be home till no one knows what hour—I am quite weary of my life.'

It was a sudden outbreak, and Frieda felt it to be a jarring note in her happiness. It did seem so pathetic to see a woman of Lady Katherine's age living only for the outside of things, and complaining thus bitterly of the children who were, after all, very much what she had made them.

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'I am sorry you are so unhappy, Aunt Katherine; but I hope Maude will not persist in what you disapprove: still——'

'Oh! well,' said Lady Katherine, suddenly rallying—for she could not endure pity from Frieda, though she had herself as it were courted it—'tell me about yourself. Your letter told me only of the old man's death—a happy thing, I should think, and——'

Frieda stopped her aunt's remarks by saying:

'Uncle John was my best friend; he was generous to me in life, and he has been equally good to me in death.'

'Has he left you a fortune?' Lady Katherine said eagerly.

'Yes, he has left me a legacy and a further share of his property at my aunt's death—a distant prospect, I hope—and he has provided for my brother, and ——' Frieda stopped; it was difficult to her to mention David to her aunt—'he has left David Willoughby what will enable him to go through Oxford, and set him quite at ease about the future.'

'I never heard such a thing! A perfect stranger like David Willoughby—what claim had he?'

'You seem to forget, Aunt Katherine, that he saved my brother's life; and that George was as dear as a son could be to both my uncle and aunt.'

Poor Lady Katherine was too utterly amazed to attempt to conceal what she felt. She asked many

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more questions, and Frieda answered them quietly and gently. At last Lady Katherine rose, and said she must not keep Thompson up any longer—became very much warmer in her manner to Frieda—and said that she hoped to see her own portrait in the Academy the next spring painted by her; and, with a second good-night kiss, she was leaving the room, when Frieda said:

'Aunt Katherine, I have something else to tell you. I am engaged to David Willoughby.'

Lady Katherine nearly dropped her little silver candlestick in the first shock of surprise.

'My dear Frieda! you are not really in earnest!'

'Indeed, I am very much in earnest, Aunt Katherine; and very happy and thankful to God for the love of so true-hearted and good a Christian gentleman.'

Lady Katherine's face underwent several changes as she stood transfixed with the news Frieda had communicated.

'Well,' she said, 'I hope you may not be *disillusionée*, my dear, for that is the common fate of us all.'

'Oh! no, no, Aunt Katherine; not when we grasp the substance and do not chase a shadow.'

Lady Katherine went slowly to her room; the world had proved to her a hard master, and Thompson was moved to pity by the sight of her mistress, as she sank down in a chair, and, clasping her hands, said:

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'Oh, Thompson! everything is against me; nothing turns out as I wish; and my children, my children, if they were only like the Willoughbys, how happy I should be!'

And this is the cry of thousands when life is slipping from them; they have sown tares, and yet they look for wheat; the brambles tear them as they seek on them for grapes; the waters of the earthly spring are bitter, and yet they have wilfully sought them instead of the pure stream of the Fountain. Alas for such! for the evening shadows are gathering, and strength fails, and it is hard to begin to turn towards the One who can comfort and heal. Hard, but not impossible; nay, for He is ever *ready*, and *waits* to be gracious.

The Octave was well in tune on the Christmas which followed the spring of Mr. Hunter's death. It would have been difficult to find a happier party than that which had gathered in a pretty house on Headington Hill, Oxford.

Colonel Willoughby had taken it, that David might be within reach of the lectures, and Fraser and Gilbert were at the Military College. Edgar had come home on leave, and there was not a single vacant place at the long table on Christmas Day.

The mother, whose sweet face was shining with happiness, had a heart full of thankfulness, and she felt as if she had reached one of those resting-places

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in life's journey which are like the bowers in the old allegory provided by the Lord of the highway for the refreshment of the pilgrim.

'Mother,' said little Cosy, 'there is something I want to know. What are we to call Frieda?'

'Call her?' exclaimed Fraser; 'sister, of course.'

'It's not that I mean at all,' said Cosy; 'you don't understand. I mean that mother always said we were her Octave, and father says I am the upper C, and Cara the lower C; and I want to know what is to be done with Frieda.

'That is rather a puzzle,' Colonel Willoughby said, 'and I am no authority on musical matters; but I am inclined to think, as Frieda generally sounds the same note as our D in the Octave, she may as well lose her identity in his.'

'I agree to the proposition,' said David, 'especially as the D would never have had any tone, or what they describe as quality of sound, unless strengthened by what we call a unison.'

'Well said, my son; and I think that we are all agreed that our Octave never made better harmony than it has done since the day when the D became double note. It is the old story, David, that union is strength.'

The music of the Octave is silent now, and will reach our ears no more. We have heard it strike out the minor chords of sadness and pain, and at

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times a jarring discord when the harmony was spoiled and for a season lost. It must ever be so in all earthly melody; we must wait for perfection here, as in other things, till the Master has set the key-note for an eternal strain of heaven's best music. But this key-note in earth and heaven is the same: and happy is the mother who can feel that she has set the music of her own life to that great dominant power, which can alone call forth all that is best and most beautiful in life and death—the power of Love.

THE END.

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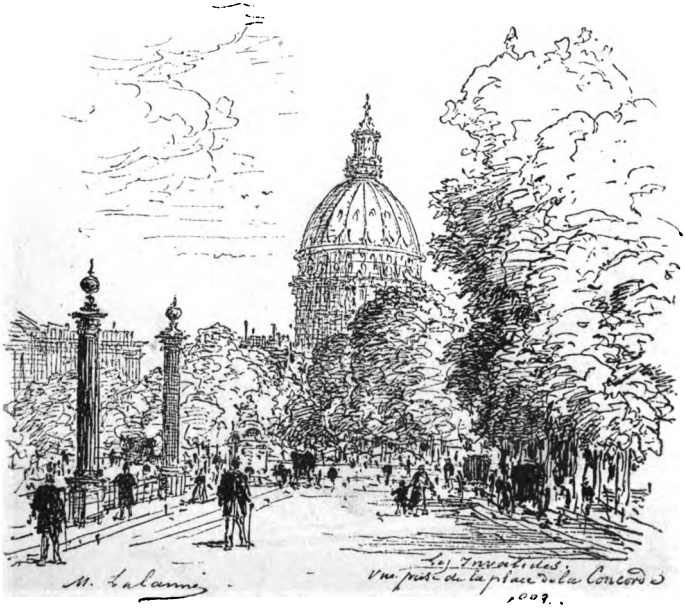

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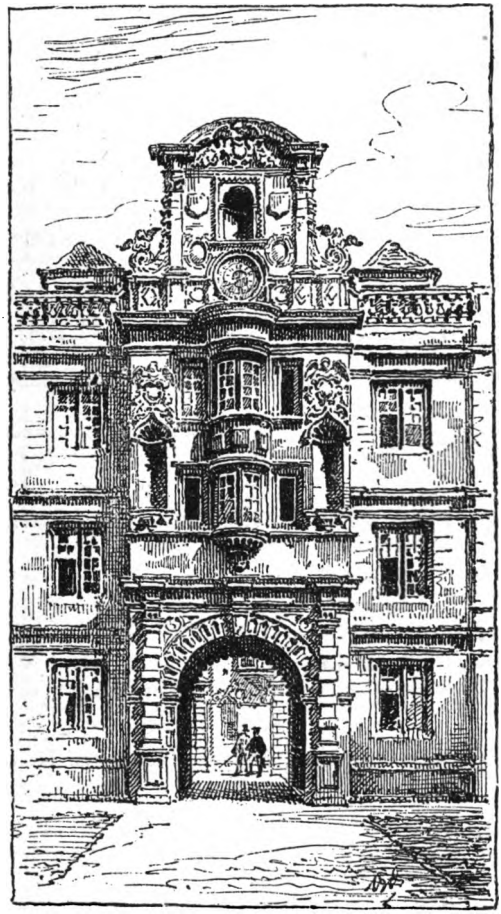

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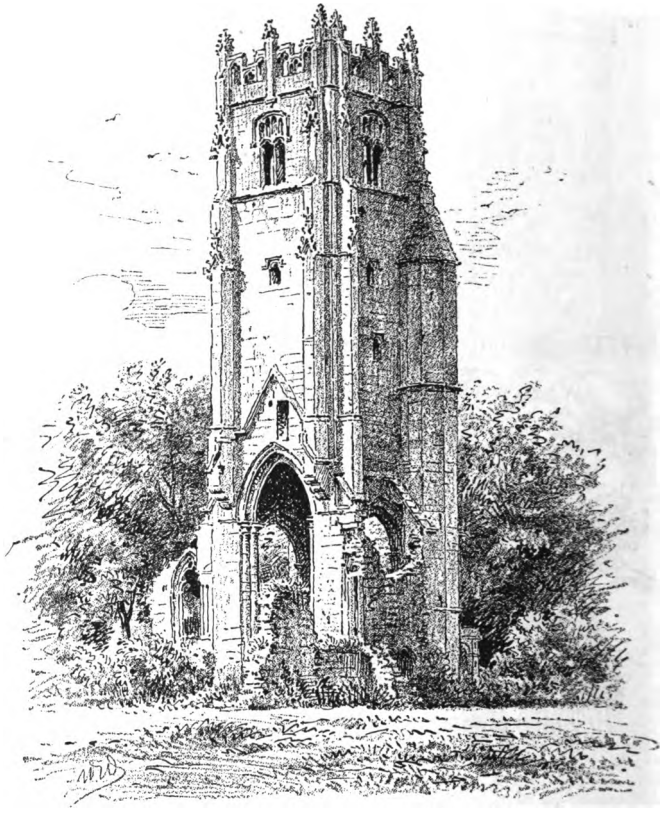

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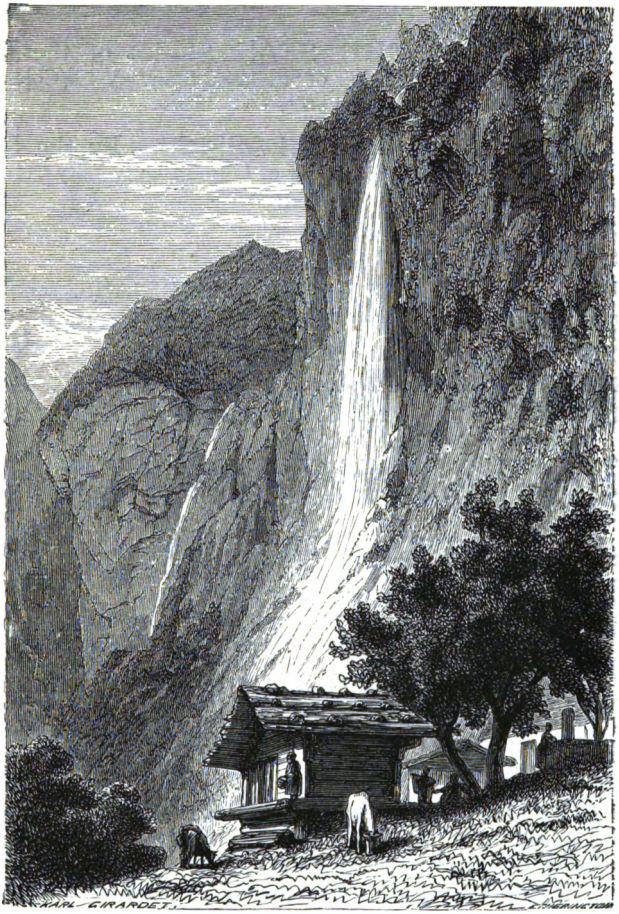

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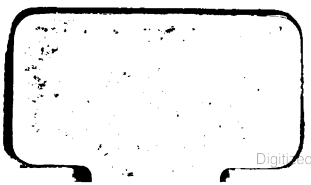
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